

**THE ROLE OF INITIATION SCHOOLS IN THE  
IDENTITY FORMATION OF SOUTHERN NDEBELE  
ADOLESCENT BOYS**

by

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**submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION  
in the subject  
PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION**

**at the**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SUPERVISOR: DR I STRYDOM**

**JUNE 1999**

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Student number: 611-261-7

I declare that "The role of initiation schools in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter Fikile Mabena, to whom it must serve as a source of inspiration. She had to endure many months of absence of love and care of a father. It was her sense of understanding, tolerance and love that made it possible for me to complete this research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude and appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr I Strydom without whose assistance, guidance, encouragement and support, this research would not have been possible. My indebtedness cannot be sufficiently expressed either in words or in writing.

I am also very deeply indebted to:

- My subject-librarian, Karlien de Beer, for all the information research, sustaining encouragement and much appreciated assistance at all times.
- The KwaNdebele tribal chiefs who gave me access into their initiation schools.
- My unsuspecting informants who gave me supplementary information. It is because of your unfailing support that my dissertation has been possible.
- The tremendous parents who allowed me to interview their children. Your trust and interviewing your children, has been a fulfilling experience.
- My dearest parents, Rosina and Moses Mabena who have struggled to give me a foundation for actualising my potential. You have been a great source of inspiration to me.
- Ms Beverley van Reenen for the good work she displayed in editing the language for this dissertation.
- Mrs Luiza van Vuuren for her patience in the painful moments of typing this dissertation so neatly.
- Above all, the credit for this work goes to the Almighty God who is the First Creator and without whom this endeavour would be in vain.

## **SUMMARY**

**Title : The role of initiation schools in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys**

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**Subject : Psychology of Education**

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**Date : June 1999**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**This study investigates the role of initiation schools in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. The subsequent influence of initiation schools on scholastic achievement was also researched.**

**A qualitative research method was used to give a scientific support to the findings made in literature. Interviewing and interview schedules were employed as data-collecting techniques. Interviews were conducted with 10 initiates from the Ndzundza and the Manala initiation schools.**

**The positive outcomes of this research can, however, not be generalised, but rather indicate possible tendencies that initiation schools play a significant role in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys.**

## **KEY WORDS**

**Initiation  
Initiation schools  
Identity  
Identity formation  
Southern Ndebele  
Adolescent boy**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Many parents and teachers are concerned about the lack of adequate educational and psychological preparation children have for their transition into adolescence and later into young adulthood. Transition from one developmental phase to another usually involves changes in personal awareness and necessitates the learning of new behaviour. A change from one phase of development to another often involves pain and confusion as the old identity dies and the new one emerges. Thus, it appears as if every major change in one's life pattern seems to require the formation of a new identity. Kroger (1989:8) supports these ideas when he says that, normatively during adolescence, there is a shift from an impulsive organisation where self-interest is the primary motivator to one of conformity to dictates of the immediate social group.

Among the Ndebele of Mpumalanga Province one frequently hears educators express concern over “troublesome” adolescents - their drug problems, suicide, delinquent acts, unbridled disrespect for school regulations, and defiance of authority. Nowadays, one also hears about rape within the school campuses, gang wars, car-hijackings and physical attacks on educators and other learners.

The need to investigate reasons for this state of affairs has repeatedly been emphasised. Some of the findings made so far indicate a decline in the importance of developing a philosophy of life, which is the most significant aspect of identity formation among adolescents; parents and educators often view the onset of the teenage years with anxiety and dread, because of popular expectations that the adolescent period will be filled with “storm and stress” (Lloyd 1985:270).

According to Adams and Hopson (1977:3-4), counselling psychologists have written quite extensively on transitions and on the need for intervention strategies to cope with them. In all these materials the transition from adolescence to adulthood has been largely neglected. Counsellors have written more about transitions in the pre-teen years and have developed some useful coping strategies. However, these researchers do not address the deeper developmental issue of change of identity from adolescence to adulthood.

According to Conklin (1935:161) the achievement of identity and sexual maturity has been almost universally recognised as a period of great significance in the development of the individual from adolescence to young adulthood. In practice, kinship groups (including the South Ndebele) signalise it with initiation ceremonies of some form. Cohen (1964:51) advocates that, in a society where organisation and continued existence depends on a kinship group wider than the nuclear family, some mechanism must be found to break any strong nuclear bond that may exist, to make the child attach to and identify with the wider adult community.

The Ndebele's primitive or savage initiation practices attracted the author's attention as a researcher because, as he turns from people to people, from tribe to tribe, and from time to time, he finds many differences in the details.

A question that should be paramount in the mind of the reader is: why should such apparently useless and savage practices be considered by the researcher a possible solution to the adolescent's developmental problem? For the researcher, the question remains: why does so much that is undesirable and so widely condemned - even by many of those who have been through the experiences and subsequently put others through them - should persist in spite of the social pressure against them?



According to the researcher, the reason for the continuation of the undesirable initiation practices must lie in the role they have in developing the identity of those who go through them. Thus, whether considered bad or good, initiation practices for the adolescent must rest largely upon the influence they have on the identity development of adolescent boys.

From the above it has become clear that the concept of identity formation and initiation practices are the focal points in addressing the adolescent's transition to adulthood. It is therefore the intention of the researcher to investigate the role of initiation rites in the identity development of adolescent boys.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM**

It has been indicated that the transition from one developmental phase to another requires a shift in the young person's identity and in the way he functions. Against this background, an analysis of the identity development of the young adolescent boys during their transition to adulthood was the motivation for this study.

The empowerment of South African women during the nineties has caused a dramatic change in the social system. Women are now occupying higher positions in the cultural and political arena. Increasing numbers of unwed mothers during the nineties have opted to stay single and bring up their own children (i.e. single parenting). Therefore, male siblings in such families have no father figures to guide them through the ordeals of puberty, which they need to maintain social continuity. It is no wonder that they create age-defined micro-societies of their own. The secrecy that once formed a vital part of puberty rites has been transferred to their mothers, who are obviously ill-informed about the context.

Green (1967:5-6) supports the above statement as he writes, “there is an enormous confusion in the adolescent boy's masculine identity due to the absence of adequate confirmation and validation of the male's hero role”.

The above statement is further endorsed by Ruitenbeek (1966:13-14), who concludes that many social problems among today's adolescents are related to an increase in the exclusivity of the mother-child relationship and a decrease in the authority of the father. Sociologists and psychoanalysts have also recognised the danger in the absence of a strong father and the subsequent presence of a dominating and possessive mother. Direct links between this type of situation and the rise in impotence and homosexuality are evident.

In the former KwaNdebele homeland in Mpumalanga Province, where most native Ndebele-speaking people are concentrated, boys often arrive at adolescence not only without the continuous presence of a strong father figure, but often with their mothers as primary authority on the scene. The fathers sell their labour in nearby cities and come back home once a month. Erikson (1980:97) argues that, no matter how positive and supportive a mother may be to the boy, the adolescent boy is likely to experience identity diffusion with the father absent.

In 1986 the then self-governing territory of KwaNdebele, experienced political violence which left indelible memories. According to the *Sowetan* (1986:4), trouble in the territory started early that year when it was announced that the bantustan would be granted independence on December 11. The territory has since had no peace. The violence has produced extensive changes in the social system, with paramount chiefs and conservative Ndebele men abdicating their responsibility for initiating boys to manhood. Both the chiefs and the men appear to have lost confidence in the values of which they are custodians and no longer understand the purpose of initiation.

There has been a major erosion of the external models on which to build identity. There has also been increased disruption in schools and families. Every child's identification of himself as being part of a social institution (e.g. school, church or family) has been threatened. Parents, educators and the church have all lost control over the youth. There has also been a deterioration in regard for political leaders and a diminishing sense of identity based on one's own community.

According to Mahdi, Forster and Little (1987:53) the above social disruption has the greatest impact on the adolescent, because adolescence is the time when crucial coping skills must be developed and the difficult task of forming a sense of identity and integrating oneself into the "real world" of social relations must be faced.

Conger (1991:13) says culturally oriented psychoanalysts in America emphasise the maladaptive consequences of societal and family structures in which parental guidance is lacking and in which the sense of identity with the community is weak. Such conditions, they believe, violate humanity's "essential nature" and are likely to lead to neurotic distortions in the development of one's own identity.

In short, the researcher is explicitly saying that contemporary Ndebele adolescent boys do not have adequate guidance from their parents to support and facilitate their transition. These adolescents then turn to each other for instruction about the issues of life, but their lack of experience and knowledge limits the possibility of an effective transition, and of finding answers to fundamental questions such as: "Who am I?", "Where am I going?" and "What can I do (with my life)?"

It has become clear from the literature study that achieving a sense of identity is viewed by psychologists as essential to adolescent development. Therefore this study will explore a possible means of addressing the problem of identity development among Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, taking into consideration

the fact that every culture has its own pattern which extends to the formation of identity (masculine or feminine) in its own way. This statement is supported by Erikson (1968:159) when he says, "identity formation relies on the way society identifies the young individual".

It is interesting to note that in the Southern Ndebele cultural context an adolescent boy, unless he is initiated through circumcision, remains a boy for the rest of his life. An uninitiated old man, despite his grey hair, is always regarded as a boy and a candidate for initiation. Van Vuuren (1992:313) puts it beautifully in his own language as follows: *"'n Ongeïnisieerde word nie oud nie. Hiermee word hy volgens gebruik steeds die kans gegun om tot volwasse status in Ndebele geledere toegelaat te word."* Therefore, in addressing the problem of identity development of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, the researcher intends to put emphasis on the role played by initiation schools in the transition to adulthood.

### **1.3 FORMAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The development of a sense of identity does not begin or end in adolescence, but the search for a sense of identity becomes especially relevant during this period (Conger 1991:56). According to Mwamwenda (1995:63), adolescents face the challenge of coping with physical, psychological, sexual, cognitive and emotional changes. Our society, however, give little formal recognition of the physiological and social changes a boy undergoes at puberty. Changes in his social status from childhood to adulthood are marked by a number of minor events, rather than by any single dramatic ceremonial observance, such as a rite of passage.

Graduation from primary school and subsequently from high school are steps to adulthood, but neither can be considered a rite of passage. Nor may the accomplishment of obtaining a driver's licence -, which for adolescent boys is often the most important indication of having grown up - be classed as one. According to Ruitenbeek (1966:39), the twenty-first birthday is the time at which a boy legally

becomes a man, but this occasion is not ceremonially marked and therefore cannot be thought of as a rite of passage. There is no clear physiological, social or legal demarcation between boyhood and manhood.

This study is concerned with one of the rites of passage aimed at enhancing the identity development of the individual. The investigation is directed at the role played by initiation rites (as rites of passage) towards the identity development of Southern Ndebele boys.

### **1.3.1 Formulation of the problem**

The society to which the adolescent must adjust himself today is far from stable. Modern technology has progressed very rapidly, and man has not always been able to keep up. The world has changed fast and dramatically, and the traditional rites (e.g. initiation rites) that once influenced adolescent behaviour have been severely criticised. Parents have not had enough time to develop values based upon modern attitudes, knowledge, and needs.

On the other hand, the Ndebele initiation rites for boys have become a source of debate and cultural controversy in view of their role in modern society, as well as their adverse and at times devastating effects on those initiated. There is ample evidence that Southern Ndebele cultural values are under threat; even among the masses - and especially the modern Southern Ndebeles in urban areas - there are individuals seeking to sabotage their own traditional cultural heritage. In newspapers one frequently reads questions such as "Are initiation rites right? How far are initiation rites relevant today? Is traditional circumcision a barbaric practice that should be eradicated or is it an African heritage that should be treasured?" *Sowetan* (1995:22).

From this perspective, the following question may be posed: “Do initiation schools have any role in the identity development of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys?”

This study will also try to find answers to the following questions:

- What are the advantages or disadvantages of initiation schools?
- What are the attitudes of rural and urban communities towards initiation schools?
- What is the impact of the aspects of development of a Ndebele initiate on identity formation?
- What factors influence the identity formation of a Ndebele boy during the initiation period?

#### **1.4 DELIMITATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY**

In one initiation camp of the Pedi in the Northern Province the *Sunday Times* (1995:15) found that initiates ranged in age from six to 18 years. In the Southern Ndebele initiation schools, unlike in the Pedi, initiates range from 15 to 18 years and above (Van Vuuren 1992:303). This study on the role of initiation schools in identity development is limited to the Southern Ndebele adolescent boys aged 15 and above, on the assumption that at this stage the search for a sense of identity has become especially relevant and adolescent boys have a more sophisticated view of what is involved in a sense of self than young boys of six.

In addition to the impact of the adolescent's view of life and his experience, the researcher also considers that adolescence is a crucial time in the communities being studied, not only as a reinforcement of early childhood and pubertal

experiences, but as a time when the child is sufficiently knowledgeable to absorb many of the basic rules, symbols, and values of his culture.

The South African Ndebele-speaking people, unlike the Matabele in Southern Africa, are divided into the Northern and Southern Ndebele. The Northern Ndebele are found in the territory around Potgietersrust and Pietersburg. They have seceded from the southern section and divided themselves into tribes that show a strong Sotho influence - such as the Kekana, Langa, Ledwaba and Seleka. Their Ndebele origin is all but effaced (Van Warmelo 1930:14). In order to avoid confusion, this study will concentrate on the Southern Ndebele and specifically on the role of initiation schools in the identity development of adolescent boys.

## **1.5 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY**

For the purpose of clarity the aims of the research have been divided into general and specific aims.

### **1.5.1 General aim**

This research intends to investigate the role of initiation schools in the identity development among Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, and its subsequent influence on their scholastic achievement.

### **1.5.2 Specific aims**

The following specific aims have been set:

- to make a critical analysis of traditional initiation;
- to assess the role of initiation in socialisation;

- to obtain the views of the community on initiation;
- to assess the effect it has on scholastic achievement; and
- to test the efficiency of primitive rites in modern society.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 Literature study**

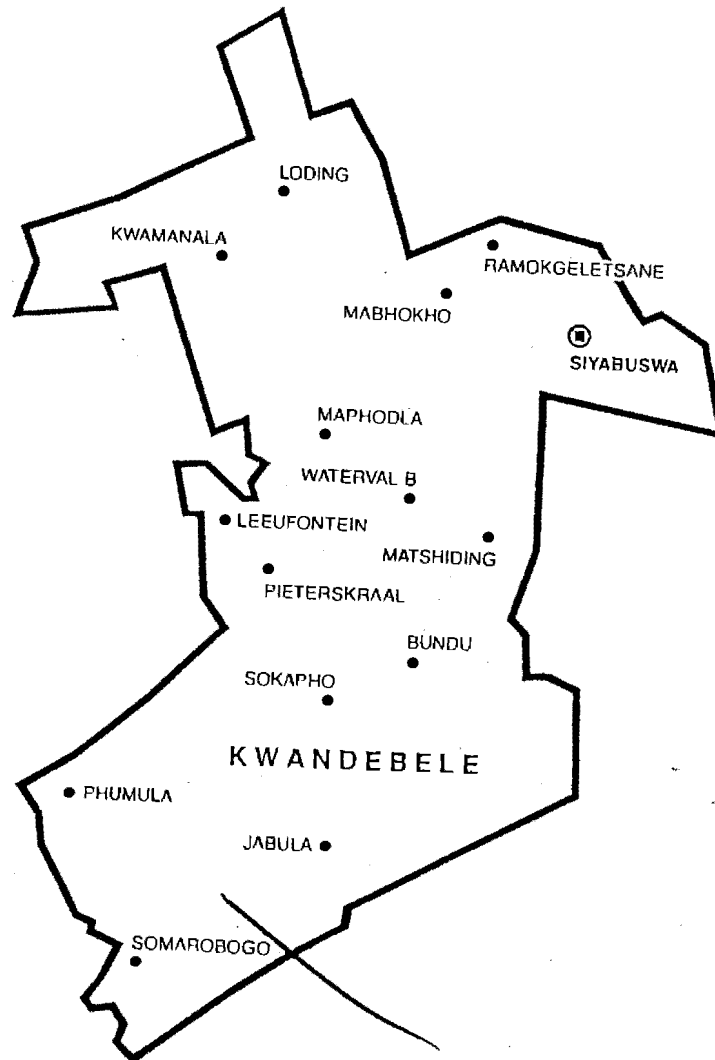
A thorough study of the relevant literature concerning initiation, the process of identity formation and adolescence will be undertaken. The literature study will be an exploration of the present state of research and will also attempt to identify different perspectives on the topic. With regard to Ndebele initiation rites, books written decades ago and newspaper articles will be consulted, because not much has been written about Ndebele as an ethnic group on its own.

### **1.6.2 Empirical investigation**

Interviews will be conducted with 10 initiates from the Ndzundza or Manala circumcision lodges in the former KwaNdebele homeland in the Mpumalanga province. It is assumed that the Ndebele inhabitants still adhere to ancient traditions and customs. The two paramount chiefs in the area, Makhosonke II and Mayisha II, head the Manala and Ndzundza tribes respectively. Figure 1.1 below indicates their respective areas of jurisdiction as Kwamanala and Mabhoko.



FIGURE 1.1



Each tribe has tribal offices distributed all over KwaNdebele and each tribal office is under the jurisdiction of a tribal chief, or induna.

The investigator's target is a sample of 10 initiates who are still learners at the formal school and will presumably go back to school after completing the initiation period. The initiation camps and the candidates for the sample will be randomly selected.

## 1.7 Explanation of concepts

### 1.7.1 Initiation

The term “initiation” in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the social status of the candidate to be initiated (Snoek 1987:101). Snoek elaborates by saying that, in philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in one’s existential condition; the initiate emerges from his ordeal a totally different being from the person he was before his initiation; he has now become another.

La Fontaine (1985:14) disagrees with Snoek's definition, saying that it excludes many “rites de passage” that are usually referred to as initiation. She wants the rituals of admission into secret societies to be included in the definition, as well as those which mark the transition between childhood or adolescence and adulthood. She stresses the fact that circumcision must be at the centre of the rite of initiation, and the initial rite of separation from boyhood.

After a broad study of the literature, the researcher came to realise that initiation is a deceptively elusive concept, about which there is a good deal of confusion and disagreement. He sees initiation as a transitional process through which boys are made to become men, not only through a biological process of maturation as in the case of women, but through a cultural process of separation, instruction, circumcision and related ordeals, reincorporation and all the other important elements of the ritual.

#### *1.7.1.1 Initiation school*

La Fontaine (1985:102) refers in her definition of initiation to the element of secret knowledge. It is on the basis of the significance of this secret knowledge that earlier writers on initiation rituals described them as “schools of initiation”, by analogy with Western institutions, and sought to show their educative functions.

What is actually of primary concern to the researcher is the pedagogic influence of the initiation school on the adolescent's formation of an identity.

Gresse (1973:108) defines the school as follows: *“Die skool is as instituut 'n instelling van die samelewing om te help verseker dat sy wyse van bestaan in die toekoms sal voortgesit word. Daarom sal dit in die skool onder andere ook daardoor gaan, dat die kind voorberei en ingelei moet word in die aanvaarde gebruike en gewoontes en medemenslike verhoudings in verskillende gemeenskapsverbande soos die gesin, kerk, staat.”*

An initiation school, like any other school, is an agency that is formally structured and organised for the purpose of inducting the child into his society. Initiation schools create a setting in which the adolescent can be happy and yet challenged. They are a place to develop optimal personal and interpersonal attributes and, as such, maximise the person's ability to contribute to society.

Towles (1993:32) in his study of the Nkumbi initiation says the Nkumbi initiates remain in the circumcision lodge for up to three months. During this period they sing songs and are taught certain moral codes articulated as “manly” behaviour, and are given the esoteric knowledge of the tribe. Thus the initiation school has a socialising influence on the adolescent in that it provides the physical environment in which the adolescent meets his peers who could become life-long friends. In this way the adolescent is afforded the opportunity of natural integration into the world.

From the information gathered on initiation one can establish that initiation schools are traditional institutions, characterised by oral teachings of esoteric knowledge of the tribe, and by rituals whose functions are to effect the transition from

adolescence to adulthood, and are obligatory for all members of a particular society. And, above all, initiation schools are involved with enculturation.

### **1.7.2 Identity**

Erikson (the psychosocial scientist who made an enormous contribution to the concept of identity) defines identity as having a relatively stable and integrated sense of one's own uniqueness - that is, in spite of changing behaviours, thoughts and feelings, one is "familiar" to oneself in a basic way. In addition, he says this sense of "who one is" must be consistent with the way in which one is viewed by other people (Erikson 1968:104).

According to Guardo and Bohan (1971:1911) there are at least four basic dimensions to an individual's sense of identity, namely

- Humanity, the sense that one is a human being
- Sexuality, one's feeling of male or femaleness
- Individuality, the recognition that one is special and unique
- Continuity, the recognition that one is essentially the same person, day after day.

The term identity, according to Kaplan (1986:21), is used in two ways:

- to refer to how one is seen, "placed" and categorised by others in relation to their behaviour towards one; and

- to refer to how a person sees and regards himself - for example as a person with a particular biography, occupying a certain social space, and carrying a particular value.

Vrey (1992:45) says self-identity is congruent with an integrated whole, made up of

- the person's conception of himself;
- the stability and continuity of the attributes by which he knows himself;
- the agreement between the person's self-conceptions and the conceptions held of him by people he esteems.

From the information given above, one can define identity as a comprehension of one's own self and others, and a struggle toward a persistent experience of sameness and continuity. Nevertheless, a detailed explanation of the concept "identity" is given in Chapter 3.

#### *1.7.2.1 Identity development*

Identity development is seen as a lifelong and continuous process, extending from the beginning of self-awareness to mutual recognition in the social sphere. It does not begin or end in adolescence. It begins where the usefulness of identification ends and it also involves a subordination of childhood experiences and identifications (Malmquist 1978:376-7; Conger 1991:56; Vrey 1992:45).

On the other hand, Kroger (1989:8-9) views the formation of identity as a lifelong evolutionary process of meaning-making. His developmental scheme conceptualises identity formation as a holistic process. Identity formation is about the process in which that which is regarded as "self" (the subject) is structured,

lost, and then reformed. That which is regarded as “other” (object undergoes transformation as development proceeds to a new stage of self-other (subject-object) balance. In other words, Kroger's construct depicts identity development as an ongoing process of finding, losing, and creating new balances between that which is regarded as self and that taken to be other.

According to Erikson (1968:159), identity formation involves a synthesis of childhood identification in accordance with his interests, talents and values. Identity formation involves a synthesis of these childhood identifications into a new configuration which is based on - but different from - the sum of its individual parts. It is a process also dependent on social response in that it relies on the way society identifies the young individual, recognising him as somebody who had to become the way he is.

Identity formation is a developmental construct that evolves and transforms from childhood through adolescence (and probably into adulthood). It is an ongoing process that involves the synthesis of all childhood experiences and imitations into a new configuration.

### **1.7.3 The Southern Ndebele**

The Southern Ndebele are divided into two tribal groups - the Manala and the Ndzundza (Mapoggers). History has it that both of these are descendants of the same primordial tribe, led by Msi. Despite geographical division and local adversities, the Southern Ndebele have survived as a nation because so many have adhered to their tribal culture. This applies to such old customs as men's initiation rites, girls' puberty seclusion, marriage ceremonies and the lobola feast.

Unlike their northern counterparts, the Southern Ndebele have clung tenaciously to their language. Nowadays Afrikaans is spoken a great deal, owing to the

Ndebele's long association with white farmers, and it is also taught in government schools. According to Courtney-Clarke (1986:21) isiNdebele is part of the Zulu-Xhosa language group; its closest affinity is to Zulu.

Van Warmelo (1930:20) says that, during festive occasions, the womenfolk wear dresses with skin petticoats and innumerable bangles and circlets of brass and beadwork. Their decorative dwellings and colourful attire serve to distinguish them from other tribes.

The Southern Ndebele inhabit KwaNdebele but are also found further afield, particularly in the districts of Pretoria, Ekangala, Bronkhorstspuit, Middelburg and Bethal. Most of these areas can be seen in Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2. The reader should not confuse this Ndebele group with the Ndebele (Matabele) who founded the Ndebele kingdom in Zimbabwe under Mzilikazi.

#### **1.7.4 Adolescent boys**

An adolescent boy in this context is an uninitiated male youth at the stage between childhood and adulthood, termed adolescence. This term is explained briefly in paragraph 1.7.4.1 below. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:13) describe adolescents as being unstable and moody; at one moment they are happy and confident and the next depressed and uncertain. They stand on the brink of personhood seeking for an identity which they cannot yet envisage.

In all the cultural groups that still practise initiation rites - for example the Ndebele, Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Venda and the Xhosa - a boy (i.e. an uninitiated male) cannot officiate in ritual ceremonies nor can he establish a family. He is belittled by members of the community and those who have come through the initiation schools. He is likened to a jackal, a dog, and called by various other contemptuous names. According to La Fontaine (1985:103) the terms "boy" and "man" are given

meaning by the culture in question; in a culture where to be a man means to be initiated, then initiation does indeed “make adults out of young boys”.

According to Schapera (1978:1), the boys who belong to those cultural groups that still adhere to traditional initiation can do whatever they like to do with impunity for, according to their custom, uncircumcised boys cannot be held responsible for their irresponsible actions. There is also no redress for anyone who suffers at their hands.

#### *1.7.4.1 Adolescence*

The study of adolescence has recently become a priority research topic among many researchers, largely as a response to the increase in adjustment problems among adolescents: alcohol and drug abuse, teenage suicide and pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency. Burbank (1988:vii) says the study of adolescence is important not only because there is an urgent need to understand the socially destructive aspects of this life stage, but also because knowledge can contribute greatly to a general understanding of the social, psychological and physical aspects of human development in our own and other cultures. Research on the role of initiation schools towards the identity development of the South Ndebele adolescent boys, for example, will contribute to the general understanding of the above aspects in the Ndebele culture.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:63), adolescence is a transitional stage of development characterised by a search for and consolidation of identity. To the Southern Ndebele, Xhosa, Pedi, Venda and Shangaans, it is a period of initiation characterised by circumcision and a testing of bravery and courage which confer on the adolescents of these societies special status and recognition.



According to Crow and Crow (1965:63) adolescence is regarded as the “period of transition from childhood to adulthood, or from dependence on adult direction and protection to self-directions and self-determination”. Crow and Crow (1965:4) go on to point out that the period of adolescence may vary with different cultures but, in modern Western society, it falls from about 12 to 19 years, or later.

Lloyd (1985:91) considers adolescence to be a time before adult responsibilities are assumed, to be used to answer questions such as “who am I?” and “what can I do?” It is also a time for examination and testing of self, parents and society. If all goes well between the adolescent and his elders, the emergent adult knows who he is and who he is not.

For the purpose of the present investigation, adolescence will be taken as the period starting with puberty (12 or 13 years of age) and lasting until the child leaves school after completing matric, which may be at 16 or in the early twenties. The defining characteristics of adolescence in this study then will be limited to age and school attendance. In addition, it will be kept in mind that adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. A detailed explanation of this concept is given in paragraph 3.4.

#### **1.7.5 Candidate**

According to Swannel (1980:77) a candidate is a person who seeks or is nominated for election to a position of authority. She further defines a candidate as a person taking an examination or test. A candidate for initiation is a boy who is regarded as suitable to undergo circumcision. He seeks to become a man and is therefore a prospective man. Since circumcision is a test of bravery, a candidate for initiation can also be regarded as a man in the making.

## **1.8 THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

In Chapter 1 the aim of the investigation has been indicated - namely the investigation of the role of initiation schools in the identity development of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys and the subsequent influence of this initiation on their school achievement. The background of the problem has been explored and the problem stated. A brief outline of the methodology has also been given. Key concepts have been explained in order to facilitate understanding.

Chapter 2 will deal with the whole process of initiation in question. The general historical background and the general patterns of initiation are dealt with; the educative role of initiation schools is discussed; the historical background of the Southern Ndebele and their initiation practices, as well as the phases in the male initiation rites are traced; the general attitude of society towards initiation schools is also looked at; and, finally, a critical analysis of initiation and initiation schools is made.

Chapter 3 will deal with identity formation during adolescence. This will be discussed by using Erikson and Marcia's identity status paradigm (Erikson 1968:97 and Marcia 1980:551). The general theory of identity formation, adolescence and adolescent relations is also dealt with. A detailed discussion of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, with regard to aspects of development in initiation schools which have an influence on identity formation, follows. Factors which influence the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele boy within the initiation school are also discussed in detail. Finally, the role expectations of the Southern Ndebele boy after the initiation period are looked at.

In Chapter 4 the design and procedure of the empirical investigation will be discussed. The results of the investigation will also be analysed and interpreted in this chapter.

In Chapter 5 a summary of research findings will be given. Deductions, recommendations and suggestions for future research will be made.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This study has set out to determine the role of initiation schools in the identity development of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. This topic is based fundamentally on the inadequate educational and psychological support adolescents have in their transition to young adulthood. The transition from adolescence to young adulthood is marked by a number of minor events that are “empty”, rather than by a single dramatic ceremonial event such as a rite of passage. Therefore, this study is directed at the role played by initiation rites in identity development.

The study is limited to Southern Ndebele adolescent boys aged 15 and above. The focus is on the concepts, “initiation”, “identity” and “identity development” of an adolescent of the group being studied. In the framework interviews, will be used to collect data on relevant aspects related to initiation, identity and identity development.

In the next chapter the historical background of the Southern Ndebele as the group being studied is briefly traced; before the entire process of initiation is critically discussed with examples drawn from all over the world.

## CHAPTER 2

### INITIATION AND INITIATION SCHOOLS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The reader hardly needs to be reminded that initiation is first and foremost a secret rite. If we happen to know something about initiation and initiation schools in primitive societies, it is because a few white men have contrived to be initiated and because a few natives have given them access to their initiation schools to gather some information. Eliade (1958:103) maintains that, despite this leakage, we are still far from apprehending the deeper dimensions of initiation.

To facilitate an in-depth understanding of initiation and initiation schools, it is necessary to take a look at what initiation is about and why people submit to such painful ordeals without the benefit of anaesthetics. After all, no group of people can inflict a pain without justifying it as a necessary condition of entry into a more exalted status. For the Southern Ndebele, it is the formal incorporation of adolescent boys into a tribal and religious life. In Ndebele tradition, an uncircumcised male cannot inherit his father's possessions, nor can he establish a family; he cannot officiate in ritual ceremonies; in fact, there is no such thing as an "uncircumcised or uninitiated man" in Ndebele society, unless an individual hides behind Christianity by becoming a "born-again Christian".

A Ndebele who is not initiated is described merely as a boy, an *umcasa* (rabbit) or an *ishuburu* (derogatory names for the uninitiated). So uncompromising are the Ndebele on this, that an uncircumcised male over the circumcision age may be overpowered and circumcised against his will. Funani (1950:iv) says that, in the Northern Province respectable citizens - school principals, teachers and policemen - have been forcibly circumcised. In KwaNdebele, Funani maintains, an

uncircumcised male was made a member of cabinet but tradition would not allow it. He was forcibly circumcised.

In this context the researcher defines initiation in terms of a ritual, and then attaches to its performance a message. Bianchi (1984:82) says a ritual is not simply a repetitive performance of a mythological or an historical past, but the application of a social act to the present situation. Therefore, by the initiation ritual, the Ndebele make a connection between the past and the present. Thus, the passage from adolescence to adulthood is marked by the experience of initiation, because this is the custom established by the founding fathers, the ancestors. By these means, the message is made explicit and passed on to new generations. In other words, by performing initiation as a way of recognising the passage from adolescence to adulthood the Ndebele act legitimately: they conform to what was done in the past, but the message is interpreted in terms of the present. By re-enacting the old rituals they declare that the present candidate should be considered an adult.

In Chapter 1, it has been indicated that educators and parents are deeply concerned about the lack of adequate educational and psychological preparation Ndebele children have for the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. The researcher has sought to investigate whether initiation schools for males can provide adequate educational and psychological support for Ndebele adolescent boys during their transition. It has also been indicated that young boys in their adolescent years are faced with certain fundamental questions - such as "Who am I"? "Where am I going?" and "what can I do?" It is interesting to note that functionally successful initiation rites in the initiation school address the very same questions.

In this chapter the researcher establishes the precise meaning of the concept "initiation"; he essays an in-depth exposition of the general historical background

of initiation and the educational and social role of initiation schools. An exposition of the general patterns of initiation that characterise all rites of passage is given before going into a more specific description of the different phases of Southern Ndebele male initiation. Examples are drawn from all over the world and through all ages to show that initiation rites have occurred globally throughout time. The attitudes of society towards initiation and initiation schools is also reviewed. And, finally, initiation is critically analysed.

## **2.2 INITIATION**

### **2.2.1 The meaning of initiation**

The concept “initiation” is ambiguous, and requires a definition in order to render it a useful term for scientific discourse. La Fontaine (1958:29) also acknowledges that there is little agreement about the concept among various authors. Although the concept has been defined in the previous chapter, its features require further consideration in order to justify the definition of the subject matter in this work. The subject of this research includes the rituals of initiation in the common sense of the term (i.e. rituals which mark the passage from one stage of development to another). Throughout this research work initiation must be analysed as an activity, and not merely as a manifestation of primitive thought.

For Mbiti (1971:94) “initiation is a central bridge in life. It brings together one’s youth and adulthood, the period of ignorance and that of knowledge. Separating a person from one life also joins him to another by dispersing the early state of passive life and then integrating it into a productive state and knitting him with the community.” Initiation serves to demarcate a specific developmental stage and ensure the acceptance of the adolescent into the community.

Young (1965:74) states that initiation rites act as a dramatic production aimed at helping the community to accept the boys’ new status and hence accept the change

as permanent, real and legitimate. Supporting this view, Rooth (1984:69) sees initiation as “a valuable mechanism for adjusting social relations and defining roles and statuses”. Any experience of a changed relationship with the parents will be experienced within the secure confines of the “regiment” or group. The community of the adolescent is also enhanced by the fact that, apart from being incorporated into the wider adult society, great solidarity with the regiment is felt, as the same hardships and experiences are endured.

Bianchi (1984:81) maintains that initiation is a complex process with wide-ranging effects. In this dissertation the concept “initiation” always includes the circumcision ritual. It is therefore used in a restricted sense to denote the circumcision of boys as well as their transition from the status of adolescent to that of a socially recognised adult. Circumcision ritual is such an important feature of male initiation that in this text the two concepts can be considered interchangeable equivalents, although they have different nuances.

In Gluckman (1962:152), Turner uses the concepts “initiation” and “circumcision” as equivalents in his study of the circumcision rituals among the Ndembu of Zambia. He holds that the term “mwadi” is derived from the word “kwadika”, “to initiate”. This term means “to circumcise” in mukandla, a circumcision ritual practised by the Ndembu tribe in Zambia.

According to Van Gennep (1960:71) initiation cannot be understood if examined in isolation; it should be left within the context of all practices of the same order which, in mutilating any part of the body, modify the personality of the individual. La Fontaine (1985:26) maintains that the body is made to represent social changes, as the circumcised penis may represent adult status. It is sufficient to notice here that the ritual initiation acts are symbolic; they express significant social concepts by associating the physical with the social. The operation on the penis through

circumcision is to be interpreted as a symbol, not as an act that reveals a faulty understanding of human anatomy.

This research, as has been stated, is concerned primarily with the structure of the male initiation rites of the Southern Ndebele and their role in the identity development of adolescent boys within the social framework. The interest is on how the rites promote values, maintain social order, reinforce group solidarity, provide support and identity for the individual and contribute to the overall process of socialisation. Therefore, a functional explanation of the term “initiation” is proposed here. In his purpose-oriented definition the researcher sees initiation as a process of “making men” whereby boys, through circumcision, are transformed into responsible adults within the community. This overall psychological, social, and ritual process is very important for the development of the individual’s new identity.

However, what has become clear is that there are both similarities and differences in the way scholars used the term “initiation”. The interpretation of La Fontaine (1985:29), Young (1965:7), Van Gennep (1960:13), and Schroeder (1992:46), who hypothesise the meaning of initiation to be “social transition” and what may be labelled “giving up one identification for another”, is much more thorough in terms of their capacity to make sense of the whole initiation rite. The authors support their interpretations with comparative data.

Other categories of initiation cited by different authors, such as initiation into a secret society or the vocational initiation of a ritual expert (e.g. of a shaman), are recognised but not discussed in this study.



### 2.3 GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

According to Isaacson and Wigoder (1973:66), circumcision was performed as a religious rite on the male children of Jews and the slaves of Jews on the eighth day after birth, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Circumcision is, however, not an exclusively Jewish rite. Ishmail was circumcised when he was thirteen years old - that is, at the age of puberty. The rite was not only practised in the ancient Middle East, but is also practised to this day in Ethiopia and by almost all the primitive tribes of Africa, Asia, and by many of those in Australia. For the Jews, circumcision was actually a covenant which Jehovah handed down to Abraham (Good News Bible 1994:17).

Garry (1939:142) says it was stated on the authority of Heroditus that the Egyptians were the first to introduce the circumcision rite from motives of personal cleanliness and that they then imparted their customs and ideas to the neighbouring people. He goes on to say that circumcision has been practised for more than five thousand years among the native tribes of the West Coast of Africa and, what is more, it is still practised today as universally as at any other period. Youth belonging to a few societies not practising it undergo the rite with novices of distant tribes, and men - even older men - travel long distances to submit to the operation.

There is some proof that initiation rites have survived throughout the ages, among all cultures. Jung (1953:129), for example, says that Rome was flooded with mystery religions, including Christianity. Even in its present form, Rome still preserves the old initiation ceremonies, somewhat diluted and degenerated, in the rites of baptism, confirmation, and communion. Hence nobody is in a position to deny the enormous historical importance of initiation.

Neuman (1973:186) also maintains that there is evidence that initiation rites have been practised throughout human history in small societies because of a

psychosocial need with a biological foundation, particularly around the time of adolescence. He further maintains that in modern society, where initiation rites no longer exist, the problems relating to transitions devolve upon the individual. The society to which he must now adjust himself is far from stable. The world is changing fast and drastically, and the traditional values that once influenced behaviour have been lost.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:415), initiation has been part of many cultures for as long as anyone within such cultures can remember. Long before Western nations sent their people to Africa as traders, missionaries and civil servants, circumcision was already practised. Quite a remarkable number of African ethnic groups accept and practise the circumcision rite as an integral part of their culture. It is reported that about one person in every five in the world is circumcised.

Mwamwenda (1995:415) goes on to explain that, in their long history, initiation schools for males have survived numerous attempts by missionaries to bring them to an end. Similar attempts have been made by National African governments. In South Africa, for example, various means have been tried to discourage initiation schools, but all of attempts have been unsuccessful because of the extent to which initiation is practised. These South African ethnic groups which practise circumcision all view the ritual with strong personal - as well as cultural - pride.

## **2.4 GENERAL PATTERNS OF INITIATION**

Before going into a more specific description of the different stages of Southern Ndebele male initiation, it is necessary to give a general explanation regarding the overall pattern of initiation. Van Gennep (1960:82), in one of the most memorable contributions he ever made, has shown that all initiation rites (rites de passage) as he named them, fall into three categories: rites of separation, rites of threshold or marginal and rites of reincorporation. These, in turn, may be summarised as social transition or the assumption of a new identity. In this submission the researcher

will give an in-depth description of each category and also show how the ritual in each category works towards establishing a new identity.

#### **2.4.1 Separation (from the mother)**

According to Brandt (1977:517-18), the experience of separation from the first love-object (the mother), and the sensation of aloneness are factors in the creation of a sense of identity. Without this separation no true autonomy or independence of the ego or superego is possible, and hence no real sense of identity can be achieved.

According to Bernstein (1993:21), the first aspect of identity formation is the separation-individuation process. There can be no satisfactory individual identity experience if the child does not develop an awareness of itself as a being, physically and emotionally separate from the mother.

Mahdi, Forster and Little (1987:5) maintain that this phase comprises symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group, either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure that has earlier defined roles and cultural identity, or from a set of cultural conditions. The "would be" candidates are removed to a special - and usually secluded - place.

Van Gennep (1960:72) highlights the fact that the separation phase is aimed at a momentous change in the boy's life; the past is to be cut off from him by a gulf across which he can never return. His connection with his mother, as her child, is broken off, and he becomes attached to the world of men. All the sports and games of his boyhood are to be abandoned with the severance of the old domestic ties between himself and his mother, in order for him to develop his masculinity. He is now to be a man, instructed in and sensible of the duties which devolve upon him as a member of a particular cultural group.

According to Jung (1953:129), transition from boyhood to manhood is a grave matter which requires complete separation from the mother, and prolonged isolation in an area accessible to men only. Because the mother is the first bearer of the soul image, separation from her is a delicate and important matter with the greatest educational significance. Accordingly, among Africans, a large number of rites are designed to organise this separation. The mere fact of becoming adult, and the process of outward separation, is not sufficient. Impressive initiation into the "men's school" and ceremonies of incorporation are still needed to make the separation from the mother (and hence from childhood) truly effective.

Cohen (1964:104) says there is no more effective way to deflect a child's emotional dependence from his nuclear family than to traumatise him, and at the same time forbid him the well-established security and comfort of his family's protection. The experience of separation serves not only to cushion the shock in the group of candidates, but also to produce an exceptionally strong bond among boys who will be circumcised together. It is very often from this group that a candidate chooses his "best friend" or his "blood brother". These are individuals who remain inseparable for the rest of their lives, and so important are these bonds that they are sanctioned by tribal law and religious dogma.

Erikson (1959:111) is on record as saying that a feeling of sorrow and loss is connected with separation from home. Young people still have to distance themselves from their parents so that they can form their own identity. Lidz, Lidz and Borsuch (1989:82) support Erikson when they say that isolation from their mothers not only prevents adolescent boys from having incestuous relations but also from seducing - or being seduced by - married women, which would disrupt the community. It also teaches the boys that they can manage without their mothers, or indeed without any women.

Gluckman (1962:137) maintains that a candidate passes from a corporate group, based on the mother-child relationship, into a membership of a social category, an association of circumcised males, and in his complete obedience to the seniors among them he becomes, paradoxically, an individual. He has been liberated for a while from dependence on the maternal tie, and the mother has to assist in this separation by surrendering her son. This is like experiencing liberation from the wicked.

According to Lidz et al (1989:77), in Papua New Guinea it is believed that a girl matures naturally, whereas the first stage of the boy's initiation (i.e. separation) is required to induce maturation. A boy does not grow into a man spontaneously, because he is born from a woman and initially identifies with women. He must rid himself of his female identification and be reborn as a man. Lidz et al postulate, as other authors have, that the separation period demonstrates to the candidate that his nuclear family is no longer his sole protector, refuge and security. Separation acts as a cultural means for deflecting further identification with the family as a primary milieu to identification with society as a secondary milieu.

Mahdi et al (1987:293) characterise separation as a process of psychological destructuring. This phase is dominated by the ego's separation from a psychological structure called the persona, a pattern of psychosocial identity and organisation that was formed during childhood and early adolescence (puberty). These authors continue to explain that strong and persistent feelings of boredom, disillusionment with life, and feelings of low self-esteem, grief and a deep sense of loss are inherent characteristics of the separation phase. Since the earlier images of self-hood and identity have been abandoned, the earlier self is now experienced as a "lost self", and no new content has yet entered to fill this void permanently.

Broadly speaking, separation has a psychological function in that it separates the child psychologically from his family of origin so that he can come to terms with

his childhood fears, learn new coping skills, and thus form a new identity as a man. The child dies psychologically to the childhood identity, and the outer and inner identities have to re-emerge. Separation constitutes only the first of a series of rituals; the most significant phases and rituals now follow.

#### *2.4.1.1 Circumcision operation*

The end of the separation phase inaugurates the threshold phase (second phase) and its rituals. However, this second phase is preceded by the circumcision rite. Both the threshold phase and the circumcision rite occur in the sacred forest. Circumcision is defined by Toubia (1995:9) as a ritual of cutting the foreskin of the tip of the penis without damaging it. Funani (1950:30) indicates that this ritual is performed in winter for the good, scientific reason that it is cold and the wounds are unlikely to fester.

Garry (1938:140) maintains that among Jews circumcision seems to be universally practised, and is always performed on the eighth day after birth unless the child is ill, in which case it is postponed for four days. Singer (1916:98) points out that the prepuce or foreskin, which is removed during circumcision, does not have large blood vessels, and circumcision is not attended by any dangerous haemorrhaging, except when the glans is injured by the clumsy handling of the knife or, in very exceptional cases, where the individual has an abnormal tendency to bleed.

Garry (1938:140-1) says that the circumcision practised by the Jews and the Mohammedans varies considerably. Among the Jews it involves not only the removal of the prepuce, but also the slitting of its inner lining to facilitate the total uncovering of the glans. The Mohammedans, on the other hand, pursue the simple method of cutting off the integumental portion of the foreskin so that almost all of the inner layer remains, and the glans remains covered.

According to Eliade (1958:22) circumcision is equivalent to death - the suffering that results from circumcision is an expression of initiatory death, followed by resurrection or new birth. But the sufferer (initiate) returns to life a new man, assuming a new mode of existence. Initiatory death signifies the immediate end of childhood, of ignorance and of the unwholesome condition. It provides a clean slate, on which will be written successive revelations at the end of which is the formation of a new man. We must note that this new life is conceived as true human existence, for it is open to spiritual values.

Schroeder (1992:208) adds to the above by saying that the bleeding of the penis during circumcision is also an act of purification, getting rid of both female influences and "old, cold blood". Old blood is cold when it remains in the child too long, and does not have "heat" anymore. It must be got rid of. New blood with heat is necessary for strength and fertility. Among the Bapedi ba Masemola it is believed that when the surgeon cuts off the prepuce, he has implicitly permanently removed all that is childish. Acquaintance with the "little knife", as the surgery has come to be known, makes one a man (Eiselen 1932:72).

The circumcision operation is the most unforgettable physical and mental scar, which lasts forever, and defines one of the major aims of initiation. The idea of being "cut off" from childhood and the influence of women is symbolised by the removal of the foreskin and, it is believed, the moist secretions that collect under the prepuce. The circumcision operation is no more than an introductory part of the initiation process. A fully initiated person is one who has gone through all the phases of initiation and their respective rites. Therefore a person who has been circumcised in a hospital or clinic is considered as uncircumcised. As indicated above, the circumcision rite merely lays the foundation for the most important phase - the threshold phase. This phase receives attention in the next section.

### 2.4.2 Threshold/liminal phase

Anthropologists sometimes use the French word “marge” (margin), or the English word “liminal”, from the Latin word, limen, meaning “threshold”. At this phase of transition, the candidate encounters the margin or “limit” of himself, and formally steps beyond into the unknown. There is often an experience of feeling “betwixt and between”, when one is neither child nor adult. It is in this phase that the most significant religious rites are practised. Here transformation is effected, as the structure of a candidate’s former identity is dissolved and a new one constituted. According to Mahdi et al (1987:95), the candidate has now come as far as he can with his childhood life. He is at the limit of its growth. Now is the time to step across the “childhood boundary” and enter the passage to a new country marked “adult”.

Mahdi et al (1987:96) further maintain that, in almost all cultures and religions, the threshold phase is a “sacred world”. The “spirit” or “soul” is awake and aware and is capable of communicating with other spirits, powers or even God. The candidate is more open to the religious influences of the supernatural than usual. These supernatural powers, it is believed, change the candidate’s nature, and transform him from one kind of human being into another.

Turner (1967:95) emphasises that even a candidate from a tribal culture must relinquish former structural ties, experience nakedness, poverty, and complete submission to the terms of the liminal passage, in order to attain the next stage. An individual from modern culture must also leave old ways behind, divesting himself of the ego’s claims to rank and social status, to attain a more highly individuated stage of growth. A candidate should have nothing - no status, no property, no secular clothing, and nothing to distinguish him structurally from his fellow humans. His condition should reflect a sacred poverty. Undoing, dissolution, and decomposition are accompanied by a process of growth, transformation and the reformulation of old elements into new patterns.



Mark (1992:49) maintains that the liminal phase is a period of strict discipline and a combination of boot camp and university. It is a period that coincides with the healing of scars, and one which completes the transformation from adolescence to adulthood. During the liminal period, boys are subjected to a variety of ordeals in order to prepare them for life's hardships. A detailed description of these ordeals and their meanings is given below.

#### 2.4.2.1 *Initiatory ordeals*

The majority of initiatory ordeals signify a ritual death, followed by resurrection or new birth. Describing the initiation rites of certain Melanasian tribes, Van Gennep (1960:72) observed that boys were taken to a sacred place and beaten with heavy sticks. Schroeder (1992:144), in his description of the Wosera male initiation rites, maintains that physical trials and sufferings are also a part of the initiation dynamic, by which the guardians test the physical and psychological maturity and endurance of the candidates. Sometimes these trials are explained in terms of the guardians being able to avenge the suffering they endured when they were candidates for initiation.

Eiselen (1932:70) has noticed in the Bapedi ba Masemola that, as soon as the training commences, the *badikane* (initiates) are made to endure many hardships. Throughout the duration of the *bodikane* (initiation), the initiates are closely guarded by the *mediti* (instructors), to ensure that no one escapes, should the hardships he is obliged to endure overwhelm him. In the first place the initiates are allowed no clothing by day or night, other than a small skin which envelopes their loins while out hunting by day. They are entirely dependent on the fires that are kept burning for protection against the bitterly cold nights. They are also frequently beaten by the guardians who always carry long, pliable wands ready for use.

Eiselen (1932:13-14) also noticed in the same tribe, quite fearsome ordeals like “taking the meerkat from the fire”. Here the guardians take a live coal from the fire and give it to the boys, who must pass it on from one to another, with their bare hands. In another type of ordeal, the guardians take twigs from a tree and build a little nest, in which they place tree fruits. They call them “wild-fowl eggs”. Each initiate is invited to inspect the nest, and receives a blow as he bends over it. This is alleged to impress on their minds that eggs found in the veld are not theirs to keep, but must be given to the guardians.

Eiselen goes on to explain that if a candidate has broken any of the initiation rules, all the boys are marched to the riverbank. Five or more men lead the culprit into the water. On arrival they say: “Your hand!” The culprit raises his hands and they put two sticks between his fingers. The strongest man of the group squeezes his fingers with these sticks, as hard as he can. They say: “You have done wrong! That is not how a man should behave”. The sticks are known as “goats”, and the punishment itself as “drinking the goat’s milk”.

Mark (1992:49) supports the experience of other authors in his description of the ordeals of young boys in the *bukut* of the Jola in Senegal. *Bukut* is the rite of initiation practised by the Jola tribe. He says these boys endure physical deprivation as a kind of trial by fire. They experience strict but healthy taboos. Their diet is restricted to white rice and dried fish, plus palm oil to help their wounds heal. Should a mother send specially prepared food to her son, the dish is confiscated and eaten by the guardians. Any boy who has come with a reputation for arrogance is likely to have a nasty experience in the forest. The guardians make a special point of teaching him humility. By the time he leaves the initiation school, he will have found maturity and gained a healthy respect for his elders.

These ordeals are actually symbolic of the initiatory death, which is a prerequisite for rebirth. The actual meanings of these ordeals now follow.

#### *2.4.2.2 The meaning of the initiatory ordeals*

Lidz et al (1989:99) in their study of masculinisation in Papua New Guinea, maintain that boys observe strict taboos during their period of seclusion; they are forbidden to drink water, eat or talk during the first three or four days. The countless dietary prohibitions are intended to prepare the boy for a life's hardships, while the purpose of restrictions on drinking is to accustom the boys to drinking very little. These dietary prohibitions also have a complex religious function, which will be referred to in the next paragraphs.

There is also a ritual prohibition against touching food with their fingers. Among the Bapedi ba Masemola, (Eiselen 1932:9) says, during the two months of seclusion in the bush the guardians dish out food to the initiates, which they have to receive in the palms of their hands. They all have to eat out of their hands, without touching the food with their fingers.

Wilson (1952:211) also says that, after the Xhosa and Mfengu have undergone initiation for only eight days, the ritual of *ukojiswa* is observed. Here the ritual portion of a slaughtered white goat is roasted on the fire, on which are placed the green leaves of the sneezewood tree, which produces a thick smoke. The meat is rubbed in the ash so that it is bitter and burned, cut into pieces and skewered on a thorny branch, and then given to the boys. Each initiate must reach for the meat from the thorny branch with his mouth, and as he does so the branch is twisted so that it scratches his face.

According to Eliade (1958:15), where there is a prohibition on touching food with the fingers, the inference seems to be that the initiate is regarded as a newborn

infant and cannot feed himself without help. In the context of most initiation rites in Africa, the initiate is likened to a baby unable to use its hands or talk. But, where the initiates are forced to take their food directly into their mouths as most animals do (and spirits are supposed to do), this is understandable, for in their isolation in the bush, the initiates are actually regarded as dead and like spirits. The prohibition against speech has a dual interpretation - as representing death, and as a return to the earliest infancy. The restriction on initiates to look only at the ground between their feet, with their heads bent, is also open to dual interpretation. Darkness is the symbol of the "other" world - whether it is the world of death or that of the foetal state.

Wilson (1952:210) and Hambly (1937:460), like others, observe that the initiates may not go to bed until late at night. Eliade (1958:15) says that in the initiation rites of certain tribes the initiates are constantly shaken so that they do not fall asleep. In other tribes, the initiates are taken to the bush in the middle of the night, after which they neither eat nor sleep for three days. Both Wilson and Hambly maintain that this is an initiatory ordeal documented more or less all over the world, even in comparatively highly developed religions. To avoid sleep is not only to conquer physical fatigue, but above all to show proof of will and spiritual strength; to remain awake is to be conscious, present in the world, and responsible.

Mahdi et al (1987:295) further explain that, as the threshold phase draws to a close and initiates begin to move into the final phase, a number of psychological features stand out and give this period a distinctive character of its own. Initiates report a gradually growing certainty of who they are, and what they want to do, overtaking the person they can no longer be. What has been more or less aimless wandering during the liminal phase becomes a more directed exploration of new possibilities for the future. What appeared to be new or foreign during the separation phase,

and was struggled with during the threshold phase, is now brought into the centre of self-awareness and becomes a more explicit and integrated part of the self.

All the prohibitions - dietary taboos, silence, darkness, restriction of sight - constitute the many ascetic exercises that enforce the initiate to concentrate and meditate. During this period, initiates are alternately forced and encouraged to think about themselves - who they are, and what they can do. They are also encouraged to think about their own cosmos and the powers that generate and sustain them. Apart from preparing the boy for hard life, the physical ordeals also have a spiritual meaning or goal - to introduce the adolescent boy to tribal culture, to make him "open" to spiritual values. In this way the initiate is prepared for the responsibilities of adult life. When this phase is complete there are rites for re-entry into society, to reincorporate the initiate into the group, but now as a new person.

#### **2.4.3 Reincorporation**

The third phase of initiation, which is called "reincorporation or aggregation", continues what was started towards the end of the threshold phase, and sees it to completion. The threshold period ends with the burning of the circumcision lodge and the blowing of the horn. Towless (1993:152) says that, when the Mbo of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) burn their circumcision lodges, all the accompanying men - other than the initiates - wait until it is reduced to ashes. They want to assure themselves that every item has been consumed by fire because, it is believed, witches are on the lookout for any paraphernalia from circumcision rites, to use in their muti for pregnant women.

Towless (1993:152), further explains that the sound of the horn itself announces the death of childhood for boys in transition to manhood, and symbolises "mercy" and "awareness" of that death. The morning after the burning of the lodge, the initiates rise from their seclusion and follow a young man with a drum into the

forest, to a stream. They all sing *Tini ko yo dei kogiaba* (we go to the water to wash) as they proceed. At the stream the initiates are instructed to remove all their clothing and bathe thoroughly. The ritual of bathing connotes the removal of a previous state. After bathing, the initiates are formally invested as proud men and adults. The ordeals and pains are in the past, and they are received with joy in the village.

Mahdi et al (1987:295) says that this last phase witnesses a gradual emergence of a new example of dominant self-organisation, comprising a mixture of former content and images (the psychological past) and new content that emerged from the unconscious in threshold phase. An initiate's sense of identity will be shaped by, and will reflect, this new dominance. Characteristically, this new being is more self-oriented than the earlier one that formed the underlying structure of his persona. As this third phase develops, individuals gain a sense that conscious identity (the inner self) is now a more authentic and accurate reflection of the whole personality than before: they feel that their lives now express a "fuller selfhood".

According to Mark (1992:54) at the end of the threshold period the Jola tribe of Senegal holds a ritual ceremony which marks the initiates' formal return to the community and symbolises their new status as adult members of the society. In many villages, the initiates leave the forest wearing horned masks. The horns symbolise the identification of the initiates with bulls. They also serve as a visual reference to the masculine values imparted during seclusion.

Schroeder (1992:202) stresses that, in the initiation ceremony of the Wosera tribe, the final stage of reincorporation centres around the *karim kangal* ceremony. This ceremony is characterised by the removal of the "black paint" from the initiates, the relaxation of taboos, communal celebration and a shared meal, and then the physical re-entry into the community's midst. All these rituals are indications of

the initiate's reincorporation into the community, as "new men" ready to take part again in daily village life.

Reincorporation is necessarily brief. The termination of this phase denotes that initiation has achieved its purpose. The boys - however incidental it may now seem - have been accorded their new status as men and, as such, are presented to the village. Since the operation scars on the penis leave ineradicable traces, the incorporation is permanent and the boy becomes a full member of the community. He is now capable of carrying out the social duties and responsibilities of an adult. He has become someone other than who he was.

## **2.5 THE EDUCATIVE ROLE OF THE INITIATION SCHOOL**

Hudson (1973:177) maintains that initiation is a necessary condition of education. Kazepides (1983:316), however, argues to the contrary, maintaining that it is inappropriate and potentially misleading to use the metaphor of initiation to describe education, and that initiation is in fact more appropriately linked to the concept of indoctrination. According to Epskamp (1991:238), general child-rearing education, formal school education, and the indigenous or traditional education offered by initiation schools, all make the child familiar with his own culture so that he can function within his group as an adult - that is why it is appropriate to liken education to a process of initiation.

Thiesen (1985:231) maintains that initiation is general enough to cover a wide range of activities like training, instruction and teaching, all of which can be part of education. Therefore in every society the purpose of education, whether formal, informal or indigenous, is to transmit from one generation to the next all the available knowledge about the environment, the social organisation, the underlying norms and ideology, skills for day-to-day survival. In the following paragraphs we look at the educative role of initiation schools in preparing the child to adapt to his environment and identify with his culture.

Instructions in the initiation school are usually carried out after the establishment of the circumcision lodge. According to Schapera (1978:13) during the course of the Kgatla initiation rites, boys are taught various rules of conduct. They are first taught songs. Every day they must sing one or two songs. Only when they have mastered these do the old men give them rules to live by. These rules are usually taught in the evenings. An old man states a single rule to the initiates and explains it. He repeats it until all say that they understand and will remember it. The rules are reviewed in the morning by their local guardians. Initiates who are unable to repeat the given rules and explain them satisfactorily are given special punishments until they know the rules thoroughly.

Schapera continues to say that boys are not only taught to observe particular rules of behaviour while still in the camp, they also receive formal instruction about the conduct expected of them once they are "men". Among other things, Schapera maintains that boys are expected to obey their elders, and they must not associate with "disobedient" peers who might teach them to dishonour their parents. In addition, they are taught rules of sexual conduct. They are warned, for example, not to sleep with a woman during her menstrual period; if she has been impregnated by someone else, if she has recently miscarried, or one who is much older than themselves. Intercourse with such a woman would make one ill, and might even cause one's death.

Bullock (1950:50) highlights some of the traditional schools of instruction of the BaVenda. He holds that BaVenda boys in their initiation schools are faced with dreary lessons, including the following: Obey the old! In all circumstances and at all times, respect the aged. If you meet them, leave the path and so show your respect. If you go towards the path where they sit, kneel down and *losha* (greet). Put your hands together in front of your breast, and bow your head, saying *Ndaha ndawu!* 'hi!'. Not until you have received permission, may you sit. Do not covet the wives of other men, or those promised in marriage. And treat those promised



to men of a senior regiment with the respect due to their husbands. Many other rules are also learned. There is much allusion to sexual affairs matters - in obscene detail - as well as some reference to conditions and diseases affecting women, which can be salutary.

The assertion that initiation is harmful for formal education no longer seems to be made, says Mueller (1977:153). This statement is supported by Van Dongen (1987:13) when he describes that in the initiation schools of New Guinea, New Britain and Surinam, in which young boys are prepared for their role in life by means of instruction in matters such as the unveiling of secret knowledge, and the display of sacred objects - even sacred mythical beings. Moral instruction is a vital element, particularly the handing down of the Papuan equivalent of the ten commandments in New Guinea. Aspects of war, peace, diplomacy, religious knowledge, marital rights and duties, and relations with in-laws are all part of the initiation school curriculum.

From the above exposition it is justifiable to liken the education of initiation schools to enculturation because it adapts the child to his sociocultural environment. The child is taught the overt behaviour patterns of his society, as well as covert thought patterns and value systems, so that he will think, act, behave and feel in ways that are acceptable and desirable. The researcher has therefore been persuaded to associate himself with the saying that the total body of instruction at the initiation school can be likened to schooling. Apart from the educative role, an initiation school - like any other social institution - appears to perform a socialisation role in the life of an initiate. This subject is referred to briefly in the next section.

### **2.5.1 The socialisation role of the initiation school**

Socialisation, according to Johnson (1968:110), is described as learning that enables the learner to perform social roles. According to Gunter (1977:27), the

“educational situation is always a social situation and the educational relation is always a social relation”. Therefore the initiation school as an educational situation is also a social situation.

In Section 2.4.1.1 it was mentioned that circumcision is equivalent to death - followed by resurrection or new birth. But the initiate returns to life a new man, assuming a new mode of being. He dies as an individual and is reborn as a member of the group. In his peculiar discussion of death and rebirth, Eliade (1958:22) refers to the change in the initiate from self-centredness to other-centredness, which is characteristic of social developmental in adolescence.

Eliade (1958:15) also holds that the social pressures on the adolescent towards the responsibilities of maturity progressively oppose self-centredness and enforce increasing consideration of others' welfare. More and more the adolescent is forced to sacrifice his personal preferences and ambitions for the sake of the happiness of others. In the initiation school, the rituals are deliberately made severe in order to enhance the abandoning of self-centredness for the other-centredness of maturity. The initiate must need and value the social presence of others.

White and Speisman (1977:70) elaborate on the social role of the initiation school by saying that it continues the socialisation process - although not always along the lines begun by the family. The two authors maintain that, while a boy may initially identify with his father, in the initiation school he may begin to identify himself in a different way. He may think, for instance, “I am now a man, and an independent man; I am a traditional role model - someone who can lead others to the traditional ways”.

It is clear now that the family, school, peer group, church, neighbours and media are not the only socialising agents. The initiation school has been shown to socialise boys to manhood. In the initiation school the initiate learns to perform social roles.

The entire exposition given above is a more general view of initiation. A more specific description of the initiatory practices of the group being studied is given below.

## **2.6 SOUTHERN NDEBELE MALE INITIATION**

### **2.6.1 Historical background of the Southern Ndebele and their initiation practices**

The researcher originally intended only to analyse the role of initiation schools in the identity development of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, but soon discovered that he could not meaningfully accomplish this without first considering the historical background of the cultural group in question.

It would be best to start off by supporting Levy (1990:4), who says that the available literature on the culture of the Ndebele consists of a relatively small body of knowledge. It includes, however, works by authors from various academic backgrounds, and others who have an interest in the field but have not necessarily received any formal training on the subject. Kuper (1978:108) has also noticed that there are limited sources of information on the culture of the Ndebele, which is striking in its verve and originality. Van Warmelo (1930:8) also maintains that there is very little knowledge of Ndebele tribal history, and that there is a lack of agreement on all points. The Ndebele culture can therefore not be clearly traced back to its origins.

The mist surrounding Ndebele tribal history has been largely cleared by Prince S J Mahlangu, the prime minister of the former KwaNdebele homeland, who stated emphatically that “it is regrettable that those who had an opportunity to write the history of black communities in this country either never wanted to write our history in its proper perspective or else never saw any significance in writing a true history of a black person. As a result, our history is always either incomplete or deliberately distorted for the benefit of certain communities” (SABC news, 19 December 1990).

Mashiyane (1992:118) even alleges that scholars themselves have not yet reached agreement on the origins of the Ndebele. Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this researcher to resolve into this problem, but knowing the actual place of origin of the Ndebele would help us with regard to the background to traditional rites, such as the rites of initiation. Courtney Clarke (1986:16) uses an old South African map to try to show us the place of origin of the Ndebele people, as well as some places where they can still be found today. See Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below.

FIGURE 2.1

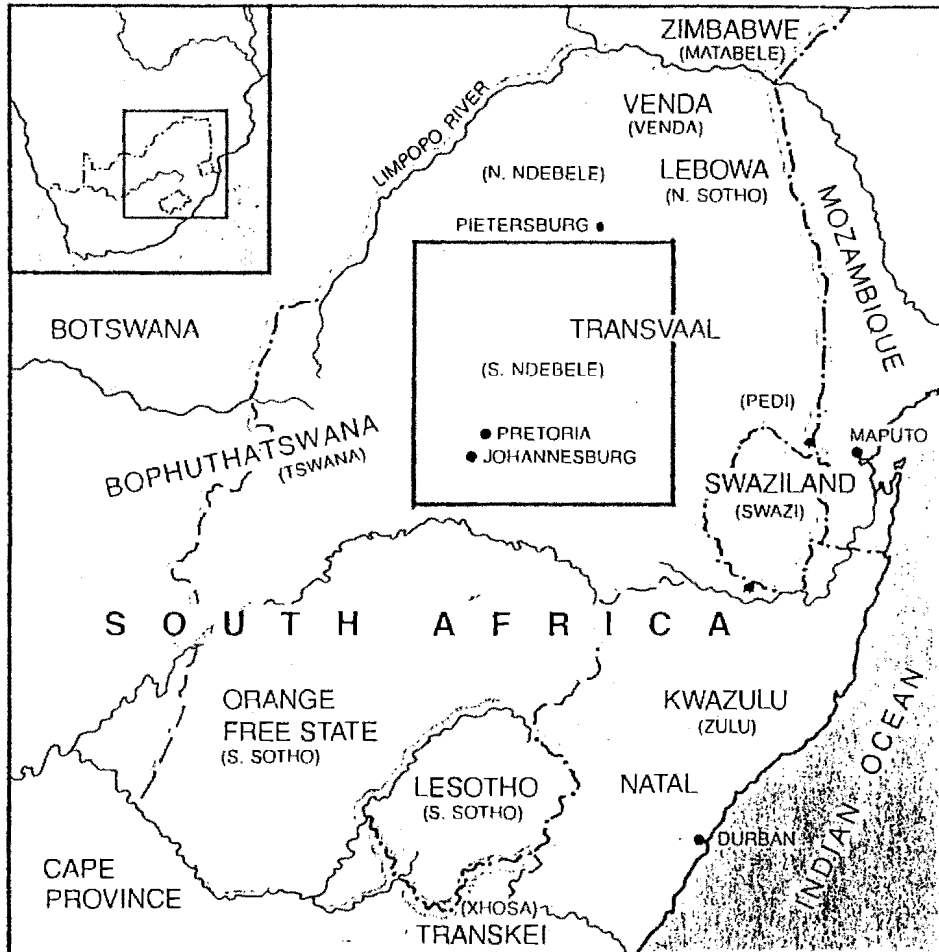
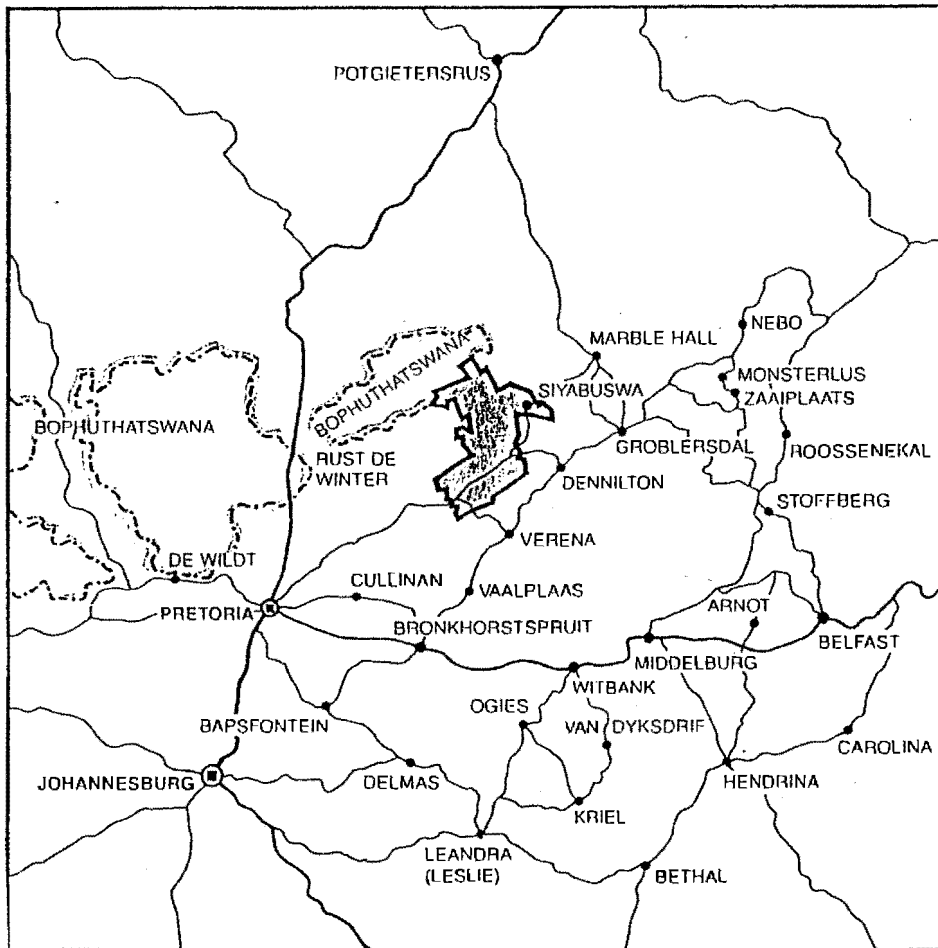


FIGURE 2.2



History has it that the Ndebele people are of Zulu stock, as is evident from their physique, language and customs. Mashiyane (1992:120) points out that initiation was seriously observed by the Zulu people before Shaka's reign. Before this period, initiation schools would be temporarily abandoned in times of war and social upheaval, either because the schools interfered with the mobilisation of men or there was a fear that the initiates would be unable to escape in the event of an attack. Shaka stopped initiation among the Zulus for military reasons and substituted it with his military regiments. In the light of history saying the Ndebele are directly descended from the Zulu race, it is surprising how seriously they observe the practice of initiation today.

According to Van Warmelo (1930:9), the Ndebele as a people were once an integrated tribe under King Msi (also referred to as Musi), living at Lundini near the Quathlamba mountains. Musi had five sons, - Manala, Ndzundza, Matombeni, Dlomo and Mhwaduba, who quarrelled over the chieftainship, with the result that the tribe split up into five sections, each under one of the five chiefs. Ndzundza, Manala, Matombeni and Mhwaduba appear to have migrated to the former Transvaal (which today comprises Gauteng, Mpumalanga, the North West and the Northern Province). Dlomo remained in the original Lundini. The natives of the area state that the migration took place before Shaka's time and that it was not due to him that they migrated. Dlomo was eventually evicted by Shaka, and he and his people went south. The remainder of this group is believed to comprise Langalibalele people, with connections to the Amahlubi, who were driven out of the former Natal by Shaka. The original tribe that migrated to the former Transvaal and is known as the Amandebele can still be traced in the four new provinces of today. Powell (1995:56) endorses the above postulation when he says that, some time around the fourteenth century, these tribes migrated from what is today KwaZulu-Natal to scatter all over what is now Gauteng, Mpumalanga, the North West and the Northern Province.

The followers of Manala, according to Coetzee (1980:274), remained in the Pretoria district after the division of the tribe, subsequently settling around Wallmansthal. There is also a small settlement of Ndebele in an area locally known as Klipgat in the De Wild district north-west of Pretoria, which falls within the North West province. These Ndebele are, according to Courtney-Clarke (1986:21), descendants of the Manala tribe and have resided there for generations. They suffered at the hands of Umzilikazi, which may account for their present scattered condition and their intermingling with the neighbouring Sotho tribes. The second tribe used to be known after its former king as the Ndzundza, but are more generally named after a later king, Mabhoko (Mapog). The early Boers knew them by the name Mapoggers, contracted to Mapors. The term "early Boers" refers to descendants of the Dutch or Huguenot colonists who settled in South Africa.

The Mapoggers, Jonas (1989:128) maintains, are now found all over Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Northern Province. Figure 2.2 for example, shows how the mapoggers are scattered. The Matombeni or Kekana tribe, today known as the Northern Ndebele, is said to have fought Manala for the chieftainship of the tribe, Manala was defeated and withdrew to the North, settling at Moletlane (Zebediela) in the Northern Province. After suffering at the hands of Mzilikasi the M'hwaduba people left and today are found not far from Pretoria, and in the North West province, but have mixed with the Tswana to such an extent that their Ndebele origin is all but effaced.

According to Fourie (1921:27-30) the Ndebele have a valid and usable historical tradition which can be dated either through calculating an average reign as lasting twenty to thirty years, or by reference to the succession of initiation schools. Calculations suggest a point of origin around 1485, when the tribe would have migrated from Zululand. After the Ndebele migrated from Zululand, only the names of the first two kings were recorded. They are Mafana and Mhlanga. Whatever their history, the Ndebele consist of the Northern and the Southern Ndebele. The former branch has been practically assimilated by the Pedi, among whom they settled, while the latter has preserved its identity in two divisions, the Manala and the Ndzundza, which are now the main representatives of the Ndebele.

Given the above background, it becomes more easy for us to trace the origin and history of initiation of the Ndebele. Therefore the initiation of the Ndebele may be traced as far back as the fourteenth century because, according to Van Jaarsveld (1985:7), the first king, Mafana (mentioned in the above paragraph) may have been initiated between 1475 and 1485 in the regiment (meaning "age-set") of the Phaswana.

Rich (1990:2) maintains that there is a satisfying irony to both the creation and the persistence of the Ndebele culture. Boer enslavement followed by crass



manipulation under apartheid not only failed to dampen, but indeed fuelled, a lively twentieth century which both defied and exploited its touristic myth. What Rich is actually referring to is the consequence of the disastrous war between the Ndzundza and the Boers in which the Boers triumphed, forcing the Ndzundza to regroup at Mapog's caves near Roossenekal in 1883. The whole tribe was indentured to the Boers for a specified period of five years. The Boers distributed the members of the Ndzundza to places as far as Klerksdorp and Heidelberg as virtual slaves to members of the victorious commando. After five years, many of the Ndzundza were released but left dispossessed of everything, with nowhere to go. Families moved from farm to farm, looking for piecework, then moved on in search of the next job. Other farmers simply refused to free their labourers.

This clearly demonstrates that the Ndebele people, like many other African survivors, have demonstrated a genius for adaptation, for adapting their own cultural forms to history. Delius (1987:13) says that, in times of war, initiation schools and other traditional rites were abandoned. During the period of forced labour youths were prevented from taking part in initiation schools. It was only in 1886 that the Boers again permitted the Ndzundza youths to attend initiation schools. Delius notes that it was in the early 1920s that large numbers of Ndzundza youths attended the initiation schools at Kafferskraal and the surrounding areas under the leadership of the acting Chief Madzidzi. Nyabela who was the ruling chief by then was imprisoned in Pretoria. It appears that it was this willingness to reinstitute initiation schools that instilled unity in the tribe which was by then without land or leadership. According to Van Vuuren (1987:167-8), it was quite striking that by the 1920s initiation schools were drumming the virtues of generational - as well as royal - authority to youth.

Despite the historical split of the Ndebele people, the Ndzundza and the Manala were lumped together as a single and homogeneous Ndebele people by the homeland policy of the regime. This policy ironically helped to unite the two

groups, who are now the main representatives of the Ndebele people. It has also become evident that neither prolonged contact with the Boers in the form of migrant labour, and their Christian teachings, nor school education managed to change the view of the Ndebele that initiation school is essential to the attainment of manhood.

The following section details the opening, organisation and administration of the Ndebele initiation schools.

### **2.6.2 Opening of the initiation**

In South Ndebele the term *ingoma* is used for initiation. The term *ukuwela* is used to denote circumcision. Therefore, the two terms are also used interchangeably as was made clear in Section 2.2.1. *Ingoma* is a tribal affair. It takes place in the dry season, between the end of April and July. Today, however, the need to return boys to formal school is a deciding factor, and the initiation is of shorter duration than in the past. It used to be held once every four years, but is now reduced to three year intervals.

Since 1979 the Ndzundza of Mabhoko have held their initiation every three years or so, as follows: in 1979, 1982, 1985, 1989 and in 1993. Compare this sequence with the cycles of name-giving to regiments in Table 2.1 in 2.7.7.1. The sequence is however susceptible to change and the initiation can be postponed to a following year, especially when there are disturbances or problems within the royal family. For instance, the initiation of 1988 was postponed to 1989 due to social violence, and that of 1992 to 1993 due to problems within the royal family. According to Levy (1990:4), the Ndzundza and the Manala customs of initiation are somewhat similar, but the fact that members of certain tribes initiate their youth separately indicates a consciousness of their tribal differences.

Ndebele initiation is an ultra-secret affair, a man's rite which must not be revealed to women and uncircumcised males. Before an initiation event is officially declared by the paramount chief - who is the only person with such power - it is first discussed among the family members of the paramount chief, to discern if there is a possible candidate in the royal family. Thereafter it proceeds to the council of the paramount chief. Van Vuuren (1992:326) says that, before the chief can open the initiation, he is obliged to perform certain religious rites. The particular chief and his direct descendants make an offering *ukuphahlela abezimu* at the old residential structures of the ancestors. The Ndzundza make their offering at *KoNomtjharhelo* (Roossenekal) while the Manala make their offering at *KoMjekejeke* (near Wallmansthal).

Sometimes the Ndzundza use the "Nyabela Day - 19 December every year" - as the offering day for their initiation. The final pronouncement of the opening of initiation is made by the paramount chief in the presence of all the tribal structures within and outside KwaNdebele. As Van Vuuren (1992:326) says, "*Die eerste stamvergadering waarby alle hoofmanne binne en buite kwaNdebele betrek word, vind in Januarie van die betrokke inisiasiejaar plaas. Hiertydens word die reelings (bv. datums) aan hulle bekend gemaak, waarna hierdie hoofmanne op regionale vlak voorbereidings begin tref.*".

### **2.6.3 Organisation of initiation**

An organisation is essentially a group of administrative officials who co-operate to achieve a mutual objective (Van Wyk 1986:30). According to Cloete (1984:85), organising entails mainly the following:

- the setting of objectives and formulation of a policy to realise them
- horizontal and virtual division of labour; and
- allocation of authority, co-ordination and control.

The organisational structure of the initiation process also entails the co-ordinated and controlled entirety of the initiation structure, its activities and powers. In order to allow these tasks to be conducted in an effected and co-ordinated manner, initiation must be administered and managed.

During the opening of initiation such matters as the creation of structures, the allocation of tasks and functions, the granting of powers and authority, and legal requirements for the managers are discussed. In this section, attention is given to the following aspects of initiation as an organisation:

- centralisation and decentralisation;
- administration; and
- internal family arrangements.

#### *2.6.3.1 Centralisation and decentralisation*

In the interview with the Ndzundza informant (13 July 1996) the researcher was informed that, initially, the Ndzundza and Manala initiation rituals were both centred around the head-quarters where the main rites are performed. Even during the Mapog war in 1883, the Ndzundza initiation ritual was still centralised, meaning that all the main important rites were centred and controlled at one point. The informant also mentions that the members of Ndzundza who were scattered all over the highveld did not hesitate to travel long distances on foot to Kafferskraal in the Nebo district in order to submit to initiation. For instance, in 1907 members of the *Phaswana* regiment (age-set) of the Ndzundza from the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeniging area were forced to travel literally on foot for up to seven days to the central initiation point in Nebo.

As a result of the long and tiring distances people needed to travel, both tribes decided to decentralise their chieftainship. The Manala chieftainship was divided into the Manala of Mbhongo which is the senior group, the Manala of Makerane, and the Manala of Mgibe. The senior group was the one that granted permission to other groups to open initiation schools. The Ndzundza chieftainship was divided into the Ndzundza Mabhoko, which was the senior group, and the Fene Mahlangu. Decentralisation therefore not only meant division into different lodges *imiphadu* by different tribal chiefs, but also that the two-month initiation process was run independently from the headquarters of different tribal chiefs.

#### 2.6.3.2 Administration

Information on administrative matters was also obtained from the Ndzundza informant (13 July 1996), who maintained that, despite the decentralisation of initiation, all the administrative arrangements began at the paramount chief's head office. Some payment or gift has always been to the paramount chief by every man wanting his child initiated. This initially took the form of an animal for slaughter, but later the gift was of money. Every man sending a child to be initiated paid a certain amount of money to the chief as well as to the traditional circumcision practitioner. The Ndebele use the word *inyanga*, as though the practitioner were a doctor. The 1989 initiation cost a man about R10 to initiate his son, and payment depended on the outcome of the operation and the agreement between the two parties, but often amounted to R5 and a piece of meat.

In recent years it has become necessary to collect money in an organised manner due to the dramatic increase in the numbers of candidates for initiation. In 1979 the Ndzundza Mabhoko head office began to use receipt books for initiation fees. These receipt books are given to the tribal chiefs who conduct initiations in their regions. Each receives sufficient receipt books for the number of candidates he expects. The receipt books and the money are submitted to the head office by each tribal chief as soon as possible, and while the initiation is in progress. In payment,

the tribal chief receives 20 % of the total sum submitted. In other words, the tribal chief receives R20 if he has initiated 10 candidates who collectively paid R100. The Manala of Mbhongo are said to use a cash book, indicating every father's payment and signature. No father is supposed to initiate his son before the necessary payment has been made.

Besides the financial arrangements, Van Vuuren (1987a:165-6) says that there are also civil arrangements to be made. Experience has taught the Ndebele that the authorities in particular territories, such as the magistrate, the police, white landowners and employers should be informed of the planned initiation school. In Ndzundza two standard forms are issued. One is issued by the Ndzundza district office and the other by the paramount chief himself. The first form is meant to be given to the initiate's employer as proof of his intention. The second form is issued to the tribal chief and indicates that he, in accordance with the provisions of the KwaNdebele Ingoma Act (Act 4 of 1984) legally qualifies to hold an initiation. The document can then serve as documentary proof for the police, the magistrate and the landowner.

#### **2.6.4 Internal family arrangements**

The preparation for initiation affects not only the tribe and family members of the prospective initiate, but also his relatives. Preparations start within the family and are the responsibility of the mother and her daughters. Powell (1995:59) says wall-painting is also associated with the domestic preparations for initiation, with each mother being expected to signal, by painting or repainting her home, the fact that one of her sons is enduring the ordeal of coming to manhood. Before the beginning of initiation sufficient mealie-meal and pumpkins are bought for use in home rituals. The mealie-meal is mixed with pumpkin to make a soft porridge dish for the *abakethwa* (initiates after circumcision). Various slaughterings that take place before and during the process of initiation require that the initiate's father prepare for them accordingly.

## 2.7 PHASES IN THE SOUTHERN NDEBELE MALE INITIATION RITUAL

Broadly speaking, the Southern Ndebele tribal initiation into manhood consists of phases that take place in public, and phases that are strictly secret and may be witnessed only by persons of the same sex who have undergone the rites. In this section the phases are described in sequential order.

### 2.7.1 The recruiting phase *ukukhonga*

Novices for initiation used to be recruited and prepared over a four-year period (now a three-year period). They are known as *abasegwabo* (prospective initiates), from *igwabo*, which means to work. They are in the service of the paramount chief, working his fields for two or three days a week, under stringent supervision. Van Warmelo (1930:34) says that in their last year of preparation, the *abasegwabo* demand their status of manhood. In the Manala context "they demand" is indicated by *ba khonga ubudoda*, which refers to the practical action of the recruitment phase.

Van Vuuren (1983:192) in his MA dissertation *Die verstigtinspatroon van die Suid Ndebele*, says that in recent years the recruitment phase starts with boys dividing themselves into small groups to *khonga* (to sing or say the recruiting formulas in a vibratory voice) over the weekends in the courtyard of the paramount chief or at the various tribal chiefs. During this phase the candidates wear nothing but loinskins, and a typical "ornament" made of grass fastened on the forehead like a torch. It is simply known as *usonyana*. Each candidate carries a wooden club which his father has instructed him to make. The candidates are arranged in a drill-platoon formation before the chief's courtyard and are taught for about two hours, in song and recitation by the instructor, or *umrhuki*. During the singing one of the candidates repeatedly jumps up to the chief and then back to the group. In this way the boys demonstrate to the chief and bystanders that they demand the status of manhood.

During this phase, initiation itself has not yet begun, one might think, but it has in the minds of the initiates as they prepare for the great event which is going to demand a period of extraordinary restraint and morality. The recruitment phase prepares a candidate mentally developing new coping skills.

### 2.7.2 The parading phase *ukuphalala*

According to the Manala informant (25 July 1996) the term parading *phalala* is used in tribal context to denote a race between the initiates-to-be. He explains that the *phalala* is not as previously, held shortly before the circumcision rite, but towards the end of the initiation period. In the Ndzundza Mabhoko, however, the parading of initiates does take place shortly before circumcision as well as towards the end of the initiation period. It does not however take the form of a competition, but merely a group parading with the regiment leader *ikosana yendanga* in the forefront. The parading phase includes other activities such as fighting with switches, or *ukubetha iswazi*. As a result of the decentralised nature of initiation, the parading phase and related rites occur simultaneously in the areas of the different tribal chiefs.

Van Warmelo (1930:34), in his description of this phase, states that the whole ritual starts with the arrival of the candidates from the neighbouring areas with their instructors and fathers at the headquarters of the paramount chief, *emtjhade*. The candidates move into the big kraal made of branches, while they sing a *khonga* song. While they remain in the kraal, the instructors and other men of earlier regiments are engaged in vigorous "switch fights" or *kweperlatgevegte* outside the kraal. Every fighter is equipped with a shield and a bundle of switches. Two fighters stand opposite each other on either side of a big stone or an empty drum which they call *isitiki*, and are watched by a crowd of older men who ensure that the fight is fair. Both fighters should take off their shirts. "A" challenges "B" by putting his foot on the drum. As soon as "B" does the same, the fight starts. The fight is usually a bloody affair with serious wounds which leave permanent scars.



Nevertheless, the Ndebele are proud of their scars. Scars are a sign of adulthood and an indication of their loyal participation in the initiation rites.

The Ndzundza informant (13 July 1996) maintains that while the candidates are gathered in the kraal, it is established that everyone has paid the necessary fees. And, finally, the paramount chief comes to the kraal to *khonga* for the very last time with the candidates. After this, bystanders make a passage for the candidates to run *ukuphalala*. They are led by the leader of the previous regiment. He runs with a maize plant in his hand and is followed by the new regiment's leader. The other boys follow haphazardly behind. They run for about 15 minutes and then come back along the same route. On arrival at the kraal, each boy is given a blanket by his father. This blanket is tied around the boy's head and face, so he cannot be seen again by the bystanders, especially the women.

Van Vuuren (1992:341) says, *Hierdie is 'n aksie van afsondering*. The boys leave the kraal, surrounded by the dancing and singing instructors, elder brothers and fathers, and returns home. At home each boy has his hair shaven by his grandmothers. This is referred to as the removal of childhood hair. He will sleep in what Goldblatt (1986:197) calls *ibandla*. This is a small kraal made of grass or branches, where men gather for shelter on ritual occasions. The aim is to separate the boys from their mothers. They spend the next day in the veld - this is the *emonyeni* (the day before circumcision). This day is used by the instructors to prepare the boys spiritually, to imbue them with strength and courage for the circumcision ordeal.

In short, the *ukuphalala* phase can be likened to Van Gennep's separation phase because, immediately after the parading, the candidate's faces are shielded so as to avoid being seen by women, and they may no longer enter into the household. Like Van Gennep's separation phase it separates the individual psychologically from his mother and domestic ties. In the Ndebele culture again the "hair of birth"

- that is, the hair of a newborn baby - is cut; widows and widowers also shave their heads after the death of their spouses. The symbolism is the same: that of a removal from the previous status and entry into a new one.

### 2.7.3 Circumcision

To go through the circumcision rite is known in Ndebele as to *wela*. According to Fourie (1921:128-9), to *wela* literally means to “go through the river”, while its figurative meaning is to enter the world of adults. The night after the parading, all the candidates are brought to the chief and kept under strong guard in the kraal. The next morning they are taken to a spot beside the river, and many men turn up to watch and sing. The first boy is led into the water. The circumcisor sits facing him, and the boy is surrounded by four to five men, one in a position to stab him to death with a spear should he scream or attempt to escape. The circumcisor uses a blunt knife (formerly made of stone), which he grinds now and then on the stones. He places his left forefinger under the preputium above the glans, so that the prepuce hangs below his forefinger, then cuts through it and removes the bottom half. And finally, a perfect cut, clean and round like a ring, appears on the bleeding penis.

After the first boy has been circumcised, the rest are taken into the river in groups, several practitioners now operating simultaneously. Courtney-Clarke (1986:21) says that, after the operation, the boys are made to cross the river and on the other side an old man pulls them out (it was indicated earlier that *wela* means to go through or over the river). He explains further that to cross the river divides children and men, the ignorant and the adept.

There is a saying among the Ndebele that “an uncircumcised male is socially an infant, a circumcised male is socially an adult”. When the surgeon cuts off the prepuce, he has implicitly permanently removed all that is childish. When one has

made acquaintance with the surgeon, one has become a man. One is no longer an *ishuburu*, (uncircumcised) but an *umkhethwa*, (an inmate of the initiation school).

The situation after circumcision can be described as two experiences, namely that of pain and that of recovery.

#### 2.7.3.1 *The experience of pain*

This condition is not a phase of initiation, but only a situation that becomes apparent directly after circumcision. In this condition the initiates are said to be physically and ritually vulnerable, and are given extraordinary care and attention. The Ndzundza informant maintains that this condition lasts for about three days and can be considered an impure, transitional phase. He identifies these days as “the days of redness”. No medicine is used during this period. However, there is a form of homoeopathic medication available for boys whose wounds become septic. The leaves of a certain bulbous plant are detached and tied around the wounded organ to prevent complications. The informant describes this condition as *ngomubi* or *omubi* which means a “bad or unhealthy state”. Initially, the initiates used to stay in a shelter walled by rudimentary rocks which looked like a cattle byre, but today it is made of branches and reeds bound together to form a lodge. It is a temporary structure, in which the initiates repose while they nurse their wounds.

#### 2.7.3.2 *The experience of recovery*

Kuper (1978:118) maintains that on the third day after circumcision, the initiates move to the actual circumcision lodge known as the *umphadu*. It is situated about 30 m from the first structure, *ngomubi*. This new lodge is viewed as the *ngomuhle* or *umphadu omuhle*, (good shelter). It denotes an improvement in the physical condition of the circumcised when the wounds start to heal. The permanent lodge is made of stone walls which are divided into sections such as the living section, the

fire place, and a section for the storage of utensils. The elders ensure that the lodge is handled and strengthened by the magical powers of the *muti* doctor to protect the initiates from witchcraft and deaths.

### 2.7.3.3 *Activities in the circumcision lodge*

Seeing that the initiates spend most of their time (two months) in the circumcision lodge, it is necessary to look at various aspects of their stay in this lodge.

#### (a) Language and communication

According to Eliade (1958:37), during the period of seclusion initiates speak a strange language used only for this period. In Southern Ndebele this language is called *isikhethwa*. This is a secret language, used as a medium of communication and instruction for nearly the entire period of seclusion, and is learned as soon as the initiates enter the *ngomubi* stage. It is the task of the instructors to teach them this language. The language is understood and learned by its users, although there appears to be a change in terminology for nouns and verbs. The language ceases to be spoken about two weeks before the initiation school ends, so that the initiates can get used to their original language again.

#### (b) Education, daily routine and discipline

The prevailing dispute between conservative and modern members of the community is whether the initiation school is an organised institution with a learning programme suitable to provide a basic educational foundation, or just a slavish clinging to the old order. Mueller (1977:153) appears to be in favour of the existence of initiation schools when he says that, the assertion that the custom of initiation schools is inimical to formal education seems no longer to be the case. Van Dongen (1987:33) supports Mueller's idea by likening the total body of instruction in the initiation to schooling. He further maintains that moral

instruction is a vital element of the initiation school. Aspects of war, diplomacy, religious knowledge, information on sex, marital rites and duties, relations with in-laws, are all part of the initiation curriculum.

Van Vuuren (1992:361) describes the following educational benefits to support initiation as a basic, organised institution with a definite learning programme:

- (i) The initial learning of the secret language, which is a prerequisite, and later the singing and praise poems.
- (ii) Instruction on sex education; marital rights and duties; respect for elderly people and people in higher authority.
- (iii) The submission to discipline - for instance to the authority of the instructors, and those in authority.

Singing and choral speeches form a great deal of the daily routine of the initiates. The initiates start to learn praise poems shortly before the end of the initiation school. Every initiate must first master a poem of self-praise and one praising his family before he can learn poems of praise for other families names. It is surprising to notice that self-praise poems are learned in the Pedi language, and one wonders why. Mashiyane (1992:117) in his article *South Ndebele and its assimilation to the Pedi language*, stresses the sociolinguistic fact that any language left alienated and surrounded by foreign languages will adopt certain linguistic features from those languages. Therefore, contact with the people of neighbouring cultures has affected Southern Ndebele culture, as is evident from the initiation poems which one would expect to be rendered in pure Ndebele, but are incongruously recited in pure Pedi by the Ndebele initiates.

A self-praise poem attaches an individual to a particular name. The name which he chooses is the one he addresses in his poem. An initiate retains this name (which is a Sotho name) for the rest of his life. According to Eiselen (1932:72), an initiate must cast aside all the names of childhood and assume a new name by which he must be known in future. There are a variety of names of previous Sotho kings after which the initiates name themselves - for example Thulari, Silaki, Mosweswe and Singalela. Mashiyana (1992:121) has quoted a praise poem that an initiate recited together with his name at the end of an initiation school. What is even more interesting is that Mashiyana says this poems is similar to a curriculum vitae, and always in Pedi.

*Ke nna Mosweswe ke ya swaila,*

*Ga ke swaile ke ya tatampela,*

*Setimela ga ke se namele ka pele,*

*Ke se namela ka morago.*

*Ka pele ke tšhaba ditšhipi tsa makgowa go fisa*

*ke "bobbejaan spanner", ga ke sware ke ya robaroba*

*ke godile ke tlotlometsi, ga ke lekane le motho*

*Ke lekana le thaba tsele tsa Mogale.*

I am Musweswe who walks swiftly,

I walk not only swiftly but also carefully,

I do not board a train from the front.

I climb from the back;

At the front I fear the white man's hot irons.

I am the big spanner; I do not just grip but break into pieces.

I am fully matured and proud; and do not equal any human kind, but the Magaliesberg.

Apart from the above educational activities, discipline also forms part of the daily routine at the initiation school.

Van Vuuren (1992:361) mentions that strict disciplinary measures exist for offenders. One of the measures is to throw an offender into a dam full of water at night. When he tries to stick his head above the water surface, the instructors throw sand at his face. When he comes out of water, they throw sand at his painful private parts. This is done until he is told to apologise to the instructors and his inmates.

(c) Deaths and illnesses

Fourie (1921:127) says that in earlier years an initiate who screamed during the circumcision operation was killed without further ado. However, during the course of the initiation, initiates still sometimes die, owing to physical exhaustion. This may be due to serious sepsis, or excessive bleeding after the operation. In the highveld initiates' deaths have been due to physical defects such as heart problems from which they suffered before. Deaths during initiation have been considered simply as socio-religious occurrences and are not publicly announced. In earlier years the deceased were buried by inmates in the fireplace of the circumcision lodge. His mother and relatives would be informed at the end of the initiation period. In the meantime his food would be prepared daily and sent to the circumcision lodge. During the initiation dance ceremony and the second parade where mothers can see their sons at close range, the place of a deceased initiate would be taken by one of the instructors, to fool the mother that her son was still alive. Today deaths are still not reported, but members of the family are allowed to bury the deceased secretly in the community graveyard.

According to Courtney-Clarke (1986:21), during the initiation dance ceremony the instructor who substitutes the deceased initiate is similarly smeared with white clay, to make him unrecognisable. As soon as the second parading ritual is completed, the food container of the deceased is taken to his mother, and destroyed in front of her. In this way she is officially informed. These days the corpse is left in the veld for two months before it is brought home for burial. Sometimes it may not even be taken home for burial, but sent straight to the graveyard.

The Manala informant (25 July 1996) mentions that any other ailments for example pneumonia and any other injuries - can be attended to by a medical practitioner. The parents or relatives can also obtain permission from headquarters to take the initiate to hospital. It is also alleged that The Ingoma Act (Act 4 of 1984) provided for inspection by a medical doctor.

(d) Food and the lodge fire

Initiates are subjected to a fixed menu. They eat two meals a day, early in the morning (07:00) and late in the afternoon (17:00). Kuper (1978:118) says that certain types of food are said to “strengthen” the initiates, while others can “kill” them. As described above, after circumcision until about the sixth day in the permanent circumcision lodge, the initiates eat a mixture of mealie-meal and pumpkin known as *umdogo* and drink only water. This is believed to be a strengthening diet during this period. For the rest of the period, initiates can eat any food fit for human consumption. They are allowed to drink only tea and sorghum beer, but drinking too much is a punishable offence, according to the initiation rules.

Eiselen (1978:9) says that food is prepared at each initiate’s home, and carried by the younger family members to a fixed spot, out of view of the lodge. Before the initiates can drink or eat anything, the instructor must first take his share, to taste



and see if the food is free of poison. On the arrival of the initiate at their temporary lodge, a lodge fire is started. This fire may not be allowed to die out while the lodge is in place. When the initiates are being transferred to their permanent lodge the coals of the initial fire are used to start the new permanent lodge fire, which burns to the end of the ceremonies.

The Ndebele initiates, like the Pedi, cover their loins with skins, and carry a club *isibhuku*, two sticks *iindonga* and a blanket for sleeping. They also put on hats made from hare skins. Mahdi et al (1987:xiii) says that, as soon as the initiates move into the circumcision lodge, they must smear their bodies with white clay almost daily. This is known in Ndebele as *idaka* or *irhwara* and *Batjhalaza impembe* means "they smear clay on". At first only the face is smeared and later, on the eight day, the whole body is painted. The clay is smeared on every morning at the river, and washed away in the afternoon. It is said that a white-clayed initiate can be seen from a long distance and consequently can be avoided by outsiders, for instance women or children who may happen to be in the bush.

All the activities in the circumcision lodge add to the preparation of the boys for manhood. The traditional education taught in the circumcision lodge has a socialising effect insofar it involves initiation into social tradition. It also inducts the child to his culture. The subjection into a fixed menu prepares him for life's hardships. The fire represents life-giving warmth and the light of night, promising survival in the cold and dark.

#### **2.7.4 Welcoming of the fathers *ukungenisa umrhubo***

The *ukungenisa* ritual marks the beginning of celebrations in the village. As soon as it becomes generally known that the welcoming ritual is about to start, much excitement spreads throughout the villages and an adequate supply of beer is prepared. The welcoming of the fathers, like the *khonga* and the parading, is also a public rite. It is held a day or two after the circumcision of the boys, and is

meant to welcome the fathers of the initiates into their new status. The Manala informant (25 July 1996), in his detailed description of the phase, mentions that the welcoming of the fathers starts at the paramount chief's place and then proceeds to the affected families after two or three days. The ceremony starts when the mothers and fathers of the initiates gather at a father's residence, to welcome him, with his new status, into his own homestead. A form of clothing - usually a jacket - is given to him as a gift. The other men and women respond by dancing and singing. The celebrants move from one father's homestead to the next, where the same ceremony is repeated.

### 2.7.5 Thanksgiving ceremonies *ukuthokoza*

This thanksgiving ceremony is no longer observed by the Manala tribe, only by the Ndzundza. It can be described as the welcoming large-scale ceremony which takes place ten days after circumcision. While the welcoming ceremony welcomes the fathers in to their new status, the thanksgiving ceremony is organised to give special thanks to the paramount chief and the tribal chiefs for the role they played in organising the initiation. The various groups can then continue with the ceremonies in their own areas. In the thanksgiving ceremony there is plenty of food and drink. The men drink mainly home-made beer *unotlabalala* and eat goat-meat, while the women eat small cakes, and drink tea and soft-drinks.

Van Vuuren (1992:364) says that, for their dancing, the women use metal and plastic flutes, wear rattles *amahlwayi* around their ankles and play plastic pipes (trumpets) as instruments. In reply to the women's song, the men respond with a rumbling sound like that of a swarm of bees. One or two men jump forward and do a shield-thumping dance and the women ululate. Every man has a piece of wild skin *iporiyana* around his neck. He also carries a shield and a long stick. The women conclude their singing with the following words: *Hééé Mahlangu! Hééé Mahlangu! Sithokozeni uMahlangu!* (Mahlangu, Mahlangu! We are thankful,

Mahlangu.) The surname Mahlangu is called because the household in which the ceremony is held belongs to Mahlangu.

#### **2.7.6 The initiation dance *ukugida igwabo***

This ritual take place at the end of the first month. The Ndzundza informant explains that during this period the public gets the first chance to see the initiates whilst they play or dance, at a distance of about 200m, because the initiates may not be recognised by women and the uninitiated. The initiates are dressed in black skirts and skin hats, and their entire bodies are smeared in white clay. Each carries a two-metre stick also painted white. The spectators, who are mainly women and children, show their pleasure by singing and ululating. On the other hand, women back at home respond with the *Hééé!! Hééé!! Hééé!!* calls. After the display of the initiates, a big feast involving the slaughtering of goats, eating and drinking, is held at the homestead of each initiate. The initiates also receive their share of beer and food. The initiation dance can be considered a rite of integration between the isolated and impure initiates with their next of kin. However, this integration is temporary and does not involve physical contact.

#### **2.7.7 Concluding phase and the awarding of the regiment name**

The concluding phase denotes the completion of all the initiation rites. Van Vuuren (1992:370) says that the final phase is held simultaneously with the purification rite, *ukusula umsizi*. Among the Ndzundza the conclusion phase starts with the visit of the elderly men to the lodge on the third day before the final day. The elders inform the initiates that the initiation lodge is about to be left. Actually, the whole day is spent drinking and dancing. On the second but last day, all the initiates are shaven for the first time after circumcision. During the course of the day an aunt of the regiment leader pays a ritual visit to the senior circumcision lodge. She brings along a calabash containing beer. After calling all her ancestors and chanting their praises, she gives the calabash to the leader. The celebration continues.

The informant relates how, late in the afternoon on the last day of initiation, the circumcision lodge is burnt, together with all utensils, sticks, clubs and clothes. It is said that such a ritual burning symbolises the end of childhood. Early in the morning of the final day the initiates take part in the second parade in more or less the same fashion as the first. As in the first parade, the regiment leader runs ahead of the other initiates with the *ubutjhulo* staff in his hand. Jonas (1989:119) defines this *ubutjhulo* as a stick with a bundle of ostrich feathers fastened to its end. On account of the excitement the initiates tend to run fast, changing the whole event into a competition. After parading, the paramount chief or tribal chief officially awards them their regiment name, saying, for example, *indanga yenu, nimaRudla* (your regiment is the Rudla), depending on the regiment name prescribed for that year. (See Section 2.7.7.1 below.)

The awarding of the regiment to the initiates explicitly and implicitly gives them a licence to manhood. From this moment they gain the status of *amasokana*, which means young men. After the parade the young men leave with their respective groups to celebrate at their homesteads. At each young man's home, a beast is slaughtered and more food and drink is served to the guests. Young men receive gifts, especially in the form of clothing, from relatives and friends.

The researcher deems it necessary at this stage to give a clearer picture of the concept of "regiment" or "age-set" as used repeatedly in this text, by referring to the table of the Ndzundza and the Manala's age-sets in Table 2.1 below.

#### *2.7.7.1 Regiments or age-sets iindanga*

The word "regiment" in this context does not refer to an army unit in the true sense of the word. It merely refers to a large, organised group of young men initiated in the same year. Actually, the most appropriate term is "age-set", which would refer to a large set of young men who have been initiated in the same year and are more or less of the same age. Van Vuuren (1992:180) lists, in the table below, the

Ndzundza and the Manala regiments, showing the regiment name and the year of initiation.

**TABLE 2.1: REGIMENT DATES (FROM VAN VUUREN 1992:180)**

No Regiments name ( <i>indanga</i> ) or <i>wela</i> name	Cycle
<u>MANALA</u>	
1 Thebe	1511 1563 1615 1667 1719 1771 1823 1875 1932 1982
2 Dzibha	1515 1567 1619 1671 1723 1775 1827 1879 1936 1985
3 Gau	1510 1571 1623 1675 1727 1779 1831 1883 1940 1989
4 Swele	1523 1575 1627 1679 1731 1783 1835 1887 1943
5 Rhasa	1527 1579 1631 1683 1735 1787 1839 1891 1951
6 Dinwana	1531 1583 1635 1687 1739 1791 1843 1895 1953
7 Phaswana	1535 1587 1639 1691 1743 1795 1847 1899 1957
8 Ngana	1530 1501 1643 1695 1747 1799 1851 1903 1960
9 Duba	1543 1595 1647 1699 1751 1803 1855 1906 1963
10 Dlou	1547 1599 1651 1703 1755 1807 1859 (1915) 1967
11 Tlari	1551 1603 1655 1707 1759 1811 1863 1919 1971
12 Linga	1555 1607 1659 1711 1763 1815 1867 1923 1975
13 Rudla	1559 1611 1663 1715 1767 1819 1871 1927 1979

No	Regiments name ( <i>indanga</i> ) or <i>wela</i> name	Cycle
<b><u>NDZUNDZA</u></b>		
1	Duba	1566 1616 1676 1736 1796 1856 1915 1975 1917
2	Dlowu	1560 1620 1680 1740 1800 1860 1919 1979
3	Dlhari	1564 1624 1684 1744 1804 1864 1923 1982
4	Nyathi	1568 1618 1688 1748 1808 1868 1927 1985
5	Rudla	1572 1632 1682 1752 1812 1872 1931 1989
6	Gawu	1576 1636 1696 1756 1816 1876 1935 1993
7	Dzibha	1580 1640 1700 1760 1820 1880 1939 1997
8	Thula	1584 1644 1704 1764 1824 1886 1943
9	Dlaza	1588 1648 1708 1768 1828 1888 1947
10	Rhasa	1592 1652 1712 1772 1832 1892 1951
11	Duka	1596 1656 1716 1776 1836 1896 1955
12	Sinya	1540 1600 1660 1720 1780 1840 1899 1959
13	Phoko	1544 1604 1664 1724 1784 1844 1903 1962/ 1963
14	Phaswana	1548 1608 1668 1728 1788 1848 1907 1966
15	Nghana	1552 1612 1672 1732 1792 1852 1911 1970

Both Van Warmelo (1930:21) and Van Vuuren (1992:180) concur, as shown, that the Manala chiefdom has thirteen regiments that follow one another, in a fixed cycle. Among the Ndzundza there are fifteen. The average period between one initiation and the next (between the formation of one age-set and the next) was initially four years, but was reduced to three years from 1979. This can be proved by using the above table as follows:

The first recorded initiation among the Ndzundza was in 1540. It started with the Sinya regiment. The next initiation was in 1544, which was the Phoko regiment.

The period between these two age-sets was four years. After the last regiment of the Ndzundza (the Nghana in 1552), the regiment names re-started with the first one being the Duba as in the second column, and the regiments follow vertically downwards until the last is reached. The same applies to the Manala who started their initiation in the year 1511.

In older days regiments played a much more important part in the life of the tribe than today. They were army units that could be mobilised for defence and aggression. The regiments could also be called out for communal hunts or for a specific task that the chief wanted performed.

According to one Pedi informant (19 June 1996), in his area the chief still calls on regiments or sections of regiments nowadays if he has tasks to be performed in the interest of the chiefdom. Younger regiments have made bricks for a clinic building. Members from one headman's ward after another took it in turns to make the bricks. In this way the chief is able to get any necessary work done, and he can spread the work among his subjects. The tasks of the regiments can also be likened to engaging in the government's Reconstruction and Development Project.

The concluding phase and the awarding of the regiment name can be likened to Van Gennep's "reincorporation phase", in the sense that the boys have been awarded their new status as adults and have been reincorporated as adults into the entire community. In philosophical terms, the boys have emerged as totally different beings from what they were before their initiation; each has become "another being". In this way the initiation rite has achieved its purpose.

## 2.8 THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY TOWARDS INITIATION SCHOOLS

### 2.8.1 Traditional societies

An uncircumcised person is known in Pedi as *leshoboro*. But the Pedis do not condone such status for long in their communities. A boy cannot forever remain a boy for, according to tribal custom, uncircumcised boys cannot be held responsible for their actions. Therefore the traditional authorities and various concerned individuals compel young boys to attend initiation schools. *The Star* (27 July 1995, p. 9) reported that, in the Northern Province, boys and men, including a 58-year-old, were abducted to a circumcision school at Mamone village. (Villagers are compelled to switch off lights at night to allow masked men to kidnap boys and uncircumcised men.)

The *Sowetan* (27 July 1995, p. 22) reported that a 40-year-old man, whose daughter had been abducted, went to an initiation school for girls at Ga-Masha village in Sekhukhune, and removed the child after she had been forced to undergo initiation. His house was set alight by a group of villagers who accused him of undermining tradition, and he fled the village. This demonstrates the treatment of a person with a negative attitude towards initiation schools.

Mashiyane (1992:120) says that the Ndebele people have come to view initiation schools very seriously, in recent years. He claims that cases are known where young men simply abandon their places of employment, without notice, to submit to initiation schools. Some go as potential candidates whilst others go as unpaid instructors. Countless primary and secondary school adolescent boys abandon their studies to undergo the ritual. University studies are also forsaken just before examinations, as young men respond to the call known in the Ndebele language as *ikosi lithabile* - (the king is happy).



The attitude of traditional society towards initiation schools is generally strong and positive. There are a number of cases other than those given above in which (especially churchgoers, who disapprove of initiation schools) were abducted and forcibly circumcised. It may be added that the initiation school of the Manala tribe, opened by the Paramount Chief Makosonke II on 11 May 1996, included his youngest brother (as regiment leader) who is studying for his master's degree in Political Science. At an initiation school at Ekangala, there was also an initiate who was studying at the University of Pretoria. This is a clear indication that people still cling to, - and boast of - their traditions despite their academic status.

### **2.8.2 Modern societies**

Coumba Touna, who is a representative at the Non-Governmental Forum Women from Mali, and a leading member of a Franco-African committee opposing sexual mutilations, says in *City Press* (11 June 1995, p. 2) that in Africa there is growing awareness and rejection of the circumcision of both men and women. But, because of the emigration of Africans to the rest of the world, the practice of circumcision is spreading around the world, especially to Scandinavia, United States, Canada, the Netherlands and France. It is further maintained that African representatives at the 1995 Women's Forum in Beijing, China, concentrated much of their energy in a campaign against the old-age tradition of circumcision.

Sending boys to initiation schools has been surrounded with controversy in recent years with modern communities deeply divided on its usefulness in the 20th/21st century. Is traditional circumcision a barbaric practice that should be eradicated, or is it an African heritage that should be treasured? These are questions in the minds of many today. The *Sowetan* (28 July 1995, p. 22) reported that more than 40 youths, aged between five and 20 years, had been admitted to hospitals in the Northern Province after poorly performed bush operations. Most were admitted with sepsis and other complications resulting from the operations. When asked, the Siloam Hospital superintendent Dr Spivack stated that he had no problem with

traditional initiation schools, but was against the practice being forced on everybody by people who wanted to make money. "What do you do with a rite that says that, before you become a man, you should be circumcised, while the same rite destroys the very organ that makes you function as a man?" asked Spivack. He concluded by saying that he would advise young boys not to go to the initiation schools, but rather to a hospital where there was proper care.

*City Press* (23 July 1995, p. 16) published a letter of concern from one of its readers who expressed his attitude towards initiation schools as follows: "It is that time of the year again when pupils engage themselves in winter schools and catch-up programmes while others choose to go to initiation schools. I do not in principle hold anything against such schools. I am only worried that some parents channel all their efforts and resources into such projects to the detriment of their children's academic lives. Even the poorest of the poor seem to have no problem to foot the bills for such schools. If that is not enough, a beast is slaughtered on the graduation day. Would it not be wiser to channel such efforts and resources into more marketable projects? Or how about these schools being categorised under other tertiary institutions, with the same entrance requirements! Maybe the government will give some subsidy so that those of us who want to enrol but cannot afford to are given a chance. Maybe the number of casualties would decrease, too."

In the *Sowetan* (22 July 1995, p. 22), the PAC spokesman and the AZAPO president both comment that, while their organisations are opposed to the abduction of people for initiation schools, the practice could be improved but should not be done away with, as it prepares boys for manhood. One of the *City Press* journalists writes in his article, "Do not risk life for manhood - if you can deliver the goods, you are OK" (*City Press* 4 August 1996, p. 19). He somehow contradicts himself when he says that ladies in Port Elizabeth would never have an affair with an uncircumcised man. Such a man is easily dismissed as an

*inkwenkwe*, a boy. However, the journalist keeps on asking himself how many boys may have lost out because they failed this test. He claims that circumcision is no longer a tribal custom, but plain, old-fashioned barbarism. He also is aware that the “surgeons” are paid R25 for each boy, but the same thing can be done for free, and under more hygienic conditions, in hospitals. Owing to the alarming death rate in initiation schools - not to mention the sad loss of masculine material (mutilation of the penis) - the journalist prefers to support the call that the custom be done away with.

It is clear from the above reports that there is no agreement between traditional society and modern society over the issue of initiation schools. Traditional society claims that modern society is taking a few unfortunate incidents to discredit an accepted custom. On the other hand, modern society appears to be divided over the issue. For instance, some maintain that circumcision is an old-fashioned, barbaric practice that should be done away with, while others do not agree. Isak Niehaus of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Witwatersrand says, for example, that there are positive and negative sides to circumcision. The apparently contradictory views make it necessary to investigate the many facets of this fascinating traditional rite further.

## **2.9 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INITIATION AND INITIATION SCHOOLS**

In the following section some disadvantages and advantages of initiation, as discussed by a number of authors, will be pointed out.

### **2.9.1 Disadvantages**

Kazepides (1983:316) says that the initiation school violates the initiate's autonomy. It does not allow him to think for himself. Moore (1972:98) identifies the teaching methods used in initiation schools - which discourage the development of a “critical spirit” - as indoctrinatory. This could be why Kazepides links

initiation with the concept of indoctrination. Ottenberg (1989:iv) is also up in arms about the approach taken by the initiation school, which, he claims, approaches the initiation of adolescents without a thorough understanding of their earlier experiences; the child is viewed as entering the "bush" as a social blank, a *tabula rasa* which will receive all or almost all of its content during the initiation process. Ottenberg maintains that when the adolescent enters the initiation school he is sufficiently knowledgeable to absorb many of the basic rules, symbols, and values of his culture. The initiation itself draws heavily on the cultural knowledge and experience that the boys have already acquired during their latent period (6-11 years): social, religious, aesthetic, as well as emotional and experiential. The period of latency is the period of development between the so-called oedipal phase (4-7 yrs) and puberty, as in Freud's model (Bosma, Graafsma, Grotevant & De Levita 1994:177).

The most serious disadvantage is the strong possibility that, whenever a boy goes for circumcision, he may not come back a "man". He could die from excessive bleeding and dehydration after being circumcised, or he may have his penis amputated. According to *City Press* (28 July 1996 28, p. 5), countless casualties and deaths are reported in the media as occurring during the initiation period. For instance, in eastern Pondoland in the Eastern Cape, a circumcision racket which left 56 boys with septic wounds was being investigated by the police. It was reported that eight of the boys had died, 16 had had their penises amputated, and the rest would never be men again.

The *Sunday Times* (30 July 1995, p. 15) has postulated that the circumcision operation is undertaken under highly unhygienic conditions. In some areas, it claims, a surgeon uses one knife on over 50 boys at a time. It is obvious that if one boy has a disease, all those after him will be infected. It was reported on the SABC news (27 November 1996) that 2,6 million people in South Africa had Aids - which could spread like wildfire if one cutting instrument was used repeatedly.

In the *Sunday Times* (30 July 1995, p. 15), one medical doctor alleged that infections are caused when the wounds are being dressed, and not during the circumcision procedure itself. He further alleged that traditional doctors put new dressings on the penises almost every day, which is when dust and bacteria often infect the wounds. The traditional doctors use cloths or green leaves and strings to dress the wounds. While most boys become ill because of infections, some suffer from pneumonia and complications arising from poor nutrition.

A spokesperson for the Northern Province government complained to *The Star* (27 July 1995, p. 15), saying that initiation had lost its traditional value and become a “business venture” for some traditional leaders. It was alleged that a senior policeman in Tzaneen was also running an initiation school, and he boasted to his colleagues that in one month he made up to R15 000.

The death of an initiate is regarded, by the Southern Ndebele as a mere socio-religious occurrence. If an initiate has died, it means he has failed to fulfil the requirements for manhood, which is the basic aim of initiation. No explanation is given as to the cause of his death, except to say that “the initiate has been swallowed by initiation”. It is true that pupils miss classes during their stay in the bush, and many do not cope when they return to school. Some newly circumcised boys are bullies, and disrespectful and consider themselves adults. Therefore men and women need to think carefully before they send their children to initiation schools.

### **2.9.2 Advantages**

Not only are negative reports heard about initiation; there are also many positive aspects reported as well.

Whiting, Richard and Albert (1958:361) say that the function of initiation is to prevent open and violent revolt against parental authority at a time when physical immaturity would make rebellion dangerous and socially disruptive. Bianchi (1984:95) supports Whiting et al when he postulates that initiation breaks an excessively strong dependence upon the mother, and ensures identification with adult males and acceptance of the male role. In the same way it also helps to maintain the cohesion of particular social units. Bianchi goes further to indicate that one of the central functions of initiation is to give each member of society permanent identification with his particular ethnic group. Circumcision among the Southern Ndebele is therefore also an ethnic identification mark.

Gluckman (1962:16) discusses the implications of Van Gennep's perception that initiation marks and organises the transition from adolescence to socially recognised adulthood. He says it is a means of divesting a person of his status as a child in the domestic domain, and investing him with the status of actual or potential citizenship in the politico-juridical domain. Eliade (1958:xv) holds that in modern terms we could say that initiation puts an end to the natural man and introduces the initiate to his culture. It is through culture that man re-establishes contact with the world of the divine and other supernatural beings and participates in their creative energies.

Epskamp (1991:239) maintains that learning in the initiation school take place through listening, watching and doing: observation, imitation and practice. This is what Ocitti (1988:356) calls "personally initiated learning strategies". Learning takes place on the spot. The techniques used in traditional education are practical and concrete, because they are linked to situations in the pupil's daily life. There are no abstract models, laboratories or hypothetical situations for training or testing. An experiment is carried out in the real situation.

An important feature of traditional education is that it prepares the initiate for many of his adult responsibilities, including his political, religious, legal, marital and sexual roles. These roles, however, differ from society to society. Fourie (1921:124), for example, says that in the Southern Ndebele initiation, the ritual has a political focus in training males to assume prominent leadership responsibilities in their respective communities. It often entails instruction in the group's lore and oratory. In this way knowledge and expertise is transferred from one generation to the next by preparing initiates in sexual, familial, and broader social responsibilities.

Tshabalala (1992:76) stresses that the teachings that take place in the initiation school include traditions and customs, as well as family values, and how to maintain a family. Besides learning about family norms and neighbourliness, the boys are taught broad about the facts of life. Upon graduation from the initiation school an adolescent boy is considered a man. There are numerous responsibilities and expectations that tradition and society place upon a man. In effect, a boy who has undergone this experience should participate in family matters. For instance, among the Southern Ndebele, an initiated boy has to participate in matters affecting his siblings and (in rare cases) his mother. During the initiation of his siblings, he has a responsibility to participate fully and often has the final word.

The most important aspect emphasised in the initiation school teachings is the *hlonipha* custom. *Hlonipha* means respect and obedience towards elders. The concept of respect among the Ndebele people conveys more than obedience shown by a younger to an older person. A good method of instilling *hlonipha* is illustrated by Eiselen (1932:15), who refers to the fact that, as long as initiates are still at school, they have to rise to their feet whenever they see an adult male, clap their hands and salute him politely. Even if one of the old men should pay a night visit, the initiates immediately rise from their sleep and pay him due respect. In this

way an initiate learns that a man is expected to behave respectfully towards his elders throughout his life.

The above advantages of initiation compel us to say that initiation should be a mandatory “crash course”. In only in two months, the individual discovers who he is, and what his abilities are (he gains self-knowledge). He is also taught social skills such as

- how people should be approached;
- respect for elders and those in authority;
- confidence and bravery;
- the virtues of obedience and responsibility;
- observance of tribal customs, morality and generosity;
- how to solve his own/family problems;
- working with others;
- leadership;
- decision-making and building trust; and
- communication.

Although the circumcision operation is regarded by westerners as cruel and barbaric, it is seen by the Southern Ndebele as the essence of the initiation school with enormous educational, moral and religious implications - apart from the hygienic aim of the operation itself. Initiation also marks the transition to manhood and aims at training initiates to have self-control. It denotes the acceptance of the task of procreation through the family and also enhances sexual pleasure.



## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an in-depth exposition of the general historical background of initiation and the general patterns of initiation, with examples drawn from all over the world and throughout the ages, have been discussed. The educative and social roles of initiation schools have also been looked at. The different stages of Southern Ndebele male initiation ceremony and the general attitude of society towards initiation and initiation schools have also been given attention. Finally, a critical analysis of initiation and initiation schools was given, looking at their advantages and disadvantages. In the next chapter the theory of the identity development of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boy is specifically discussed.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **IDENTITY FORMATION OF THE SOUTHERN NDEBELE ADOLESCENT BOYS**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Kroger (1989:1) maintains that the present-day adolescent is preoccupied with the problem of self-definition. Havighurst (1972:44-5) advances the same idea, saying in Erikson's words that the adolescent of today is faced with the basic psychosocial task of "identity achievement".

The adolescent must become a person in his own right - a person who has charge of his life, who knows who he is. Many contemporary adolescents suffer from aimlessness and uncertainty about themselves, which Erikson (1983:94) calls "identity diffusion" (confusion about who they are). This is why the researcher has sought to advocate the continuation of primitive initiation schools as a sure means of identity formation.

To be initiated is to be told that your existence is important and that your life has meaning; once you are initiated, the seed of self-knowledge is sown and can never be forgotten.

In Chapter 2, the researcher essayed a detailed exposition of the general historical background of the Southern Ndebele as a people and of their initiation patterns. The effects of the different phases of initiation, and the effects of the developmental tasks on identity formation, were reserved to be dealt with in this chapter.

Therefore the researcher establishes a general meaning of the term "identity" by looking at its divergent meanings and discusses identity development in adolescence by using both Erikson and Marcia's identity status paradigms. The general theory of identity formation and adolescent relations is reviewed before the identity development of the South Ndebele adolescent boy is specifically discussed.

Here aspects of development that influence identity formation in the initiation school are discussed. Factors that enhance identity formation in the formal school situation are compared with those in the initiation school to evaluate whether the initiation school curriculum can really provide for the education and identity formation of the adolescent. Lastly, a strong emphasis is put on the role expectations of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boy after his initiation.

### **3.2 WHAT IS IDENTITY?**

Despite the common and popular use of the term “identity”, the concept is a complex one. Erikson is hailed as one of the principal theorists and a “founding father” of the concept of identity, but he was reluctant to define it. We are repeatedly going to quote from Erikson's authoritative works on the subject.

According to De Levita (1965:5) the term “identity” has as many meanings as there are theories which employ it. This inevitably leads to confusion, because conceptual meanings that are valid only at a certain level of complexity may be used erroneously at other levels. This is further supported by Jacobson-Widding (1983:14) who says that when scholars in several disciplines discuss “identity”, it sometimes seems as if they are talking about entirely different concepts. Some may refer to ethnic stereotypes, and others to social commonality, personal integrity and cultural heritage.

Bosma, Graafsma, Grotevant and De Levita (1994:7) contend that there is no consensus about the phenomena that identity refers.. They further contend that, despite its wide usage by different scientists, others reject its being a useful scientific concept because of its supposed vagueness. When we restrict ourselves to psychology, it appears that various definitions of identity are used and each is linked to theoretical and empirical traditions. The researcher therefore agrees with Bosma et al (1994:23) when they say terms like “identity” suffer from “definitional fuzziness”.

Despite the complexity and ambiguity of this concept, some brief clarification is required, and those aspects of identity pertinent to this research need to be extracted.

Etymologically, the word “identity” is derived from the Latin root “idem”, meaning the same. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Allen 1992:585) gives the following two definitions as among the meanings of the word: (1) “the quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; (2) the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else”. It is thus necessary to consider the identity of a person in both senses of the term.

Guardo and Bohan (1971:1911) have suggested that there are at least four basic dimensions to an individual's sense of identity:

- humanity, the sense that one is being human;
- sexuality, one's feeling of maleness or femaleness;
- individuality, the recognition that one is special and unique; and
- continuity, awareness that one is essentially the same person day after day.

Thus, developing a sense of identity requires that an individual should recognise that “he” or “she” is one being, with a unique identity who has been, and will be, a male or female human being separate from and entirely like no other.

The term “identity”, according to Mathunyane (1992:8), is used in two ways:

- to refer to how a person is seen, placed and categorised by others as reflected in their behaviour towards him,
- to refer to how a person sees and regards himself, for example, as a person with a particular biography, occupying a certain social space, and carrying a particular value.

Gerdes, Moore, Ochse and Van Ede (1988:288-9) mention three interdependent aspects of identity, namely:

- the public (social identity), which refers to one's position in society and the role one fulfils;
- the personal identity, which refers to a person's sense of continuity - that is, of being one and the same person throughout life and in different situations; and
- the individual identity, which refers to a person's sense of individuality or uniqueness.

Jacobson-Widding (1983:13) contends that the word "identity" has two basically different meanings. One is "sameness", the other is "distinctiveness". On a superficial level, distinctiveness seems to refer to individual identity, while sameness tends to be connected with a sense of commonality between several persons who constitute a group or an identity shared by several persons who constitute a group. Essentially, identity is conceptualised as a person's self-definition. Hamer and Bruch (1974:436) add by saying that this self-definition consists of the fundamental goals, values and beliefs to which one is unequivocally committed.

Hamer and Bruch (1974:436) again quote Erikson, maintaining that identity

- provides a sense of continuity between a person's past, present and anticipated future;
- provides a framework for organising and integrating behaviour across diverse aspects of a person's life; and
- provides direction for a person's life.

According to Lloyd (1985:131), identity may be defined as having a relatively stable and integrated sense of who one is and will become - that is, in spite of changing behaviours, thoughts, and feelings we are familiar to ourselves in a basic way. In addition, he maintains that the sense of "who we are" must be consistent with the ways in which other people view us.

In the survey of literature we endeavour to draw out those aspects of identity which implicitly or explicitly seem to offer important contributions to the development of the meaning of "identity". To find the general meaning of the term we shall start with what is common to all the definitions that have been found for identity and define this common factor by saying that identity refers to an individual's integration of stability and continuity with his conception of himself, consistent with the conceptions held of him by people he holds in esteem. Connected with this is the implication that, through this integration, the individual is in a position to occupy a "firm" place in the community.

Having arrived at the general meaning of the concept of identity, we can now embark on how it is developed. We are going to start our discussion of identity development by using the "identity status" paradigm.

### 3.3 IDENTITY FORMATION

#### 3.3.1 Identity status paradigm

Bosma et al (1994:67) maintain that the empirical study of identity formation by means of the identity status paradigm began more than 25 years ago. This model had its origin in Erikson's psychoanalytic theory of psychosocial development. In this section both Erikson and Marcia's psychosocial models of identity status are discussed.

##### *3.3.1.1 Erikson's identity status paradigm*

Evans (1967:21-2) uses the term "epigenesis" to describe Erikson's property of identity development. Meaning literally "upon" (epi) "emergence" (genesis), epigenesis implies that one item develops on top of another in space and time. In his theory, Erikson distinguishes eight stages of development, the first five of which cover the years of childhood and adolescence. In his designation of each period of development, Erikson also mentions its opposite - what happens if the particular crisis is not adequately weathered. He consequently uses the term "versus" to indicate the two poles of success and failure.

Since adolescent identity can, according to Conger (1991:56), not be isolated from its childhood antecedents and resulting adult states, we shall merely give a brief description of the first five phases of psychosocial development, but dwell on the fifth in greater detail, because this stage is considered in this research as a particularly important and active stage in the lifelong process of identity formation. The eight stages proposed by Erikson (1968:74) are presented in the chart below. Each stage is defined by a developmental task or crisis that needs to be resolved if the individual is to continue a healthy pattern of development.

Dreyfus (1976:10) concurs that each of these phases contributes to the formation of the next, and that it also contributes directly to the establishment of a well-defined identity.

**FIGURE 3.1 ERIKSON'S EIGHT STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

(1)	Basic trust	vs	mistrust
(2)	Autonomy	vs	doubt, shame
(3)	Initiative	vs	guilt
(4)	Industry	vs	inferiority
(5)	Self-identity	vs	role confusion
(6)	Intimacy	vs	isolation
(7)	Generativity	vs	stagnation
(8)	Integrity	vs	despair

The first five of Erikson's stages of development will now be briefly reviewed to illustrate their relationships to the identity development or crisis of adolescence:

#### **PHASE 1: BASIC TRUST vs MISTRUST**

The major concern of the first stage is the establishment of trust. Erikson (1968:97) believed that infants develop trust when their world is consistent and predictable - when they are fed, kept warm, and comforted in a consistent manner. But it must be said that the amount of trust derived from the earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love, but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship. An



adolescent who experienced trust during infancy enters the world with a sense of strong confidence.

## **PHASE 2: AUTONOMY vs DOUBT, SHAME**

The second stage is described as a conflict between autonomy on the one hand, and shame and doubt on the other. In the toddler period children begin to assert independence - they say no, and they can walk and run where they choose. Erikson (1974:110) believed it important to give children a sense of autonomy and not be harsh or punitive during this period. The child who has experienced satisfactory trust in his life will be ready to act independently and to make independent decisions. A sense of independence and a spirit of adventure are necessary conditions for adequate identity formation during the adolescent years.

## **PHASE 3: INITIATIVE vs GUILT**

The third stage entails a conflict between initiative and guilt. The child in this stage begins to be task-oriented and to plan new activities. It is a phase when masturbation and sexual curiosity are often noticed by parents. The danger during this period, according to Lloyd (1985:58), is that the child may develop excessive guilt about his actions. It is during this period that the child intrudes into other people's lives and thoughts by way of identification. If he is punished for his intrusions, he may develop guilt and perceive himself as evil. This feeling may have a negative effect on his identity formation during adolescence.

## **PHASE 4: INDUSTRY vs INFERIORITY**

The child in this stage needs to solve the conflict between industry and inferiority. Children enter school, begin to perform tasks, and acquire important skills. Achievement and a sense of competence become important; a child who has no particular competencies or who experiences repeated failure may develop strong feelings of inferiority. Children who learn that they are skilful tend to take the

sense of competence with them through adolescence; those who learn failure early tend to carry a sense of inferiority through adolescence. Erikson (1968:86) feels that the child should be encouraged to complete activities he has initiated.

#### **PHASE 5: SELF-IDENTITY vs ROLE CONFUSION**

This phase has been preceded by four earlier stages, each having a necessary place in the task of building an identity. During each earlier phase an aspect of the person's identity has been formed. The success of each phase contributes to a healthy achievement of identity during the fifth stage. In this stage the child is expected to know himself, to know who he is and his way forward.

According to De Levita (1965:62), identity versus role confusion is the choice facing one when childhood comes to an end and youth begins. Drawing upon the resolutions to the childhood stages, one must now approach the task of identity formation. Thus, growing and developing young people is primarily concerned with attempts at consolidating their social roles. A sense of self-identity implies that the child has overcome his childhood problems and that, as an adolescent, he is able to take on the challenges of the adult world on an equal footing with adults.

Kroger (1989:27) says to become faithful and committed to some ideological world view is the task of this phase. Just as a sense of basic trust is a prerequisite for the realisation of autonomy and initiative, so the acquisition of a sense of self-identity is a prerequisite for adult choices and decision-making, such as a choice of a career or a marriage partner. This phase is one of life's critical crossroads in the transition to adult life; not only must it incorporate a trustworthy "I", who has evolved as an autonomous individual capable of initiating and completing satisfying tasks modelled by significant others, but it must also transcend such identifications to produce an "I" sensitive to its own needs and talents.

According to Lloyd (1985:18), conflict in this stage can result in either the achievement of self-identity or identity diffusion (being confused as to who one is and what is meaningful in life). Conger (1991:61) added that there are two important ways in which the search for identity can go wrong: it may end prematurely or may be indefinitely extended. These two pitfalls are respectively referred to as "identity foreclosure" and "identity confusion". Thus identity foreclosure is an interruption in the process of identity formation, a premature fixing of the adolescent's self-image that interferes with the development of other possibilities for self-definition; identity confusion, on the other hand includes adolescents who are not genuinely committed to any particular life course. Douvan and Adelson (1966:16) explain that these are adolescents who never develop a strong, clear sense of identity; they do not know who they are, and cannot keep themselves loose and unattached (i.e. free and independent). Such persons may exhibit a pathologically prolonged identity crisis, never achieving any consistent loyalties or commitments.

On the contrary Waterman (1985:13) maintains that identity diffusion should not be thought of as necessarily maladaptive. To be identity-diffused is developmentally appropriate for individuals who have not yet reached a point in their lives where it is necessary for them to make identity decisions.

The identity crisis of adolescence is thus caused not only because it is hard for the adolescent to establish who he is, but because in the process he must establish himself - alone and in a unique way. Brandt (1977:517-8) sees the experience of identity development as finding oneself painfully separated from one's accustomed environment, alone, and forced to rely on one's own resources.

From the above description of Erikson's identity statuses it has become clear that identity does not first emerge during adolescence, but rather evolves through earlier stages of development and continues to be reshaped throughout life.

Identity is thus an ingredient of all stages of the human life. Identity formation during adolescence reflects developmental resolutions to all preceding stages and serves as a base for personality developments that lies ahead.

### *3.3.1.2 Marcia's identity status paradigm*

Numerous studies suggest that Marcia's identity status provides a useful schema for studying identity development in adolescence. According to Schutheiss and Blustein (1994:159) Marcia used Erikson's theoretical model of identity to operationalise the identity-formation process. In assessing the identity statuses of adolescents, Marcia employed two criteria: crisis (exploration) and commitment. "Crisis" refers to a period of active questioning and engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives; commitment refers to the presence or absence of decisions in the areas of occupation and ideology.

According to Marcia (1980:551) the identity-development process is characterised by four identity statuses:

- Identity achievement
- Moratorium
- Foreclosure
- Identity diffusion

These are states which the adolescent may encounter in achieving identity. They are not stages that adolescents pass through, but statuses that characterise an adolescent's orientation at a particular time. According to Boyes and Chandler (1992:279) the course of an individual's efforts to form a mature sense of identity commonly carries him through an ordered sequence of different identity statuses that are marked by both (a) the presence or absence of a sense of crisis regarding

the need to make important life choices, and (b) whether or not commitments to particular alternatives have yet been made.

The four identity statuses as proposed by Marcia are shown in the table below. According to Waterman (1985:11) they are defined by their positions on two dimensions: exploration and commitment.

#### **MARCIA'S IDENTITY STATUSES**

		<b>Crisis dimension</b>		
		Past crisis	In crisis	Absence of crisis
Commit- ment dimensio n	Presence of commitments	Identity achievement	-	Foreclosure
	Absence of commitments	Identity diffusion	Moratorium	Identity diffusion

For our purpose here, important characteristics associated with each identity status are briefly reviewed:

(a) Identity achievement

Waterman (1985:11) defines an identity achiever as someone who has gone through a period of exploration and has emerged with relatively firm identity commitments. Such a person will be knowledgeable about the material that comprises the identity commitments and will structure his life in such a way as to translate those commitments into action. Identity achievers usually evidence a sense of confidence, stability and optimism about the future.

(b) Moratorium

According to Flum (1994:438) the moratorium status refers to an adolescent who is currently in a state of crisis and actively seeking among alternatives in an attempt

to arrive at a choice. Someone who is in crisis will show evidence of seeking to acquire information useful to resolving the crisis. Such activities may include: reading about the possibilities or; talking with friends, parents or others knowledgeable about the material of interest. During the early stages of identity exploration there is often a feeling of anticipation and curiosity. Later these feelings may give way to discomfort if the adolescent finds that exploration, per se, does not provide clear-cut answers to identity questions. This will obviously have a negative influence on identity formation.

(c) Foreclosure

Hamer and Bruch (1994:437-8) say this status refers to individuals who have committed themselves to occupational or ideological orientations (typically those of parents) without adequate exploration. Foreclosed individuals are happy and self-satisfied, they are very authoritarian and unbending in their opinions of the "right way". They are conventional in their moral reasoning and very committed to vocational and ideological values. According to Lloyd (1985:270) this commitment to vocational and ideological values is the most significant aspect of identity formation because it provides adolescents with a framework with which to integrate the various aspects of identity - for instance occupational aspirations and related life choices.

(d) Identity diffusion

Schutheiss and Blustein (1994:159) maintain that the diffusion status includes individuals who have not been engaged in exploration and who have not been committed to the various dimensions of identity. Kroger (1989:38) says, in terms of interpersonal relationships, these individuals tend to be distant and withdrawn, most likely stereotyped or isolated in their dealings with others. Others may drift through life in a carefree, uninvolved way, while others may evidence severe psychopathology with great loneliness. This may lead to poor identity formation and to poor self-actualisation.

The researcher tends to agree with those who consider Marcia's work the most popular model for research into Erikson's fifth phase of psychosocial development. It is a clear elaboration and expansion of Erikson's "identity versus role confusion" conflict and describes the four identity resolutions based on attitudes of crisis and commitment toward social roles. These four identity statuses have been validated as modes of dealing with the problem of fidelity, the crux of identity formation during adolescence. The above sub-topic entails a discussion of identity formation using Erikson and Marcia's identity status paradigm. What follows is a more general discussion of identity formation.

### **3.3.2 General theory of identity formation**

Erikson (1968:159) holds that, during childhood, "being like" admired others and assuming their role and values reflects the mechanism of identification as the primary means by which the self is structured; it is when the adolescent is able to select some and discard others among these childhood identifications, in accordance with his interests, talents, and values, that identity formation occurs. Identity formation involves a synthesis of these earlier identifications into a new configuration, which is based on - but different from - the sum of its individual parts. This is further endorsed by Wittenburg (1968:10) and Gordon (1968:204) who postulate that identity formation begins where the usefulness of identifications ends.

Conger (1991:66) argues that, although earlier identifications play an important role in identity formation, something more is needed: the capacity to synthesise successive identifications into a coherent whole - a capacity aided by the adolescent's more advanced cognitive skills. Like Conger, Horrocks (1972:53) also argues that in order to understand the process of identity formation, one must first accept the premise that identities - at least to some extent - grow out of various identifications, but that identity and identification are neither interchangeable nor identical concepts. He maintains that identification is the cognitive-

affective process of selective organisation of perceptions which become preferential to an individual in a given transaction, while identity is the individuation of perceived, unified ideas differentiating an individual from his identifications.

According to Vrey (1992:45) the formation of identity is a lifelong task. The individual and his society are largely unaware of the process. Identity development becomes quite stable during adolescence. What Vrey emphasises is that, with educational support an "own" identity gradually takes shape. This identity is accepted by others and a certain dignity is assigned to it. When this happens the person becomes another. It means that "given a new identity", he becomes another sort of a person.

Kroger (1985:18) points out that, if all goes well, by the end of adolescence and the beginning of early adulthood, there should be a sense of well-being. The young person should be able to say to himself, "this is what interests me and what I value". He should know exactly what it is that he wants from life, as well as knowing where he fits into society and what others expect from him (Gerdes et al 1981:74).

It has become clear that a child's emerging sense of identity is formed on foundations of his earliest and most primary identification with people most meaningful to him. It therefore goes without saying that adults should at all times be examples to their children. Since identity formation stabilises during adolescence, we also need to review the general theory entailed in adolescence. Therefore, in the next section adolescence is reviewed as the stage during which the adolescent needs exposure to his relations.



### 3.4 ADOLESCENCE

The reader should recognise that, in itself, the term “adolescence” holds different meanings for different researchers. For some the age of adolescence is limited to the high-school years, for others it is the period between puberty and the taking of adult roles, and for yet others it is any period up to the time of marriage. A few researchers avoid the problem by not defining the term.

In this context, the researcher chooses not to be dismayed by the lack of consensus among other researchers. His selection of the material dealing with adolescence is in agreement with Schultz (1981:50) who contends that there can be no explicit age cut-off points for physical development and maturity in adolescence, because individuals progress at their own rate. Since adolescent growth and development is not synchronised with chronological age, age cannot be used as a criterion for defining the period of adolescence.

According to Kroger (1980:63) any attempt to consider adolescence as a fixed, predictable and rigid phase of development which is limited to specific age groups would be futile in view of the following:

- individual and cultural differences;
- early or late maturation;
- developmental disparities, such as advanced technology that demands extended training and schooling, in turn causing young people to remain economically dependent on their parents for a longer period before they start to work; and
- both an earlier pubertal phase and an extended adolescent phase.

Bearing these differences in mind, the researcher accepts, in agreement with both Mwamwenda (1995:63), Dacey (1986:3), and Moris (1982:108) that adolescence can, however, be broadly categorised to encompass the teenage years and/or the early twenties. Nonetheless, the boundaries of adolescence in most firstworld psychology literature are usually from the onset of puberty to around the early twenties.

Since “adolescence” is a broad concept and there is currently a large body of research exploring it, only the adolescent's formation of relationships is discussed in this section.

#### **3.4.1 The formation of relations in the adolescent's world**

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:141) point out that the child's world includes everything that has meaning for him, not only his geographical world but all his relationships with objects, ideas, people and even himself. According to Vrey (1992:186) the child's relationships are an expression of this world. It is accordingly within the framework of relationship formation that the Southern Ndebele adolescent will be studied, with the aim of indirectly explicating his identity formation.

The formation of relations is a fundamental human socialisation process. Mathunyane (1992:69) postulates that during adolescence young people experience radical changes in their relationships. They want to relate to others and to form stable, mature and intimate bonds with them. According to Engelbrecht, Yssel, Griessel and Verster (1984:138), in their adolescent relationships young people begin to understand who they really are, and they become more sure of their personal identity and where they are going. This implies that adolescents' aspirations and expectations for the future are driven by their inner development. Various changes take place in their relationships with themselves and their parents,

and in relation to religious values, the opposite sex and friends. These relations are now briefly discussed.

#### *3.4.1.1 Relations with self*

By adolescence the child's self-identity and self-concept (self-image) have already developed and become quite stable. According to Engelbrecht (1970:176), adolescent's spend much time reflecting on their inner selves and changes in the appearances of their bodies. Bergh (1984:3) says these changes threaten the feeling of self-containment and the adolescent needs support and time to integrate these changes into a positive self-identity. The physical self (body image) is more important during adolescence than at any other stage of a person's life except possibly old age. Vrey (1992:167) endorses this by saying, "with these dramatic changes, the body itself becomes a symbol of experience". Depending on its condition and quality, the body give rise to subjective experiences like the following: acceptance and esteem, based on a good-looking face and body, and a sense of security based on physical strength or being good at gymnastics.

According to Mwamwenda (1995:73) adolescents spend a considerable amount of time examining themselves psychologically and physically. The way they are treated by others can contribute (either positively or negatively) to their self-concept. Since they have a keen interest in their physical appearance, the mirror plays an important role in reflecting the adolescent's physical appearance. He may spend long hours before the mirror, combing his hair into different styles, trying different facial expressions and postures, and worrying about pimples and his complexion in general. How he views himself in regard to his build and attractiveness will determine his self-identity. If he is satisfied with the condition of his body, he will probably develop a positive self-concept. Failure to experience satisfaction causes an unfavourable self-concept and a lack of positive self-esteem.

Rice (1984:198) maintains that an adolescent becomes so concerned with himself that he may conclude that others are equally obsessed with his appearance and behaviour. He feels he is "on stage" much of the time, so that much of his energy is spent "reacting to an imaginary audience". This helps to account for his extreme self-consciousness. Sometimes groups of adolescents react to this imaginary audience with loud and provocative behaviour.

Vrey (1992:169) concludes by saying that an adolescent who is accepted by peers and significant others will also accept himself. This aids the formation of a positive self-concept. An adolescent whose achievement in most of his school subjects is high by his own standards, will have a positive academic self-concept, which will assist the formation of a positive self-concept in general. Success in public performance - before the class or some other audience - will assist his self-concept in the same way as praise or encouragement from people he values does.

#### *3.4.1.2 Relations with family*

According to Rogers (1985:222) the home is a reservoir of strength upon which children draw to meet their physical and emotional needs. Parents provide the security from which the child initiates other relationships. Harmonious family relationships relate to high self-regard and effective social functioning in adolescence. Unhealthy family relationships relate to conduct disorders and poor social relationships in adulthood.

Conger (1991:22) points out that the ease with which adolescents are able to achieve a clear sense of identity depends on the kind of relationship they have had and continue to have with their parents. Dreyfus (1976:12) concurs by saying that a healthy adolescent self-image is a product of a good balance between affection and control on the part of parents.

In the case of a traditional family the son is always favoured by the father and in the early years he is encouraged to view his father as a role model. Shade (1983:145) says that the black male adolescent identifies more with the parent's personality than with the father's career. Fathers seem to function best in the development of sex-role orientation for males and educational achievement for girls.

In rare instances - such as where grandparents stay with their children - and grandchildren - friendly relationships occur easily. In the evenings the adolescents enjoy listening to their grandparents relating traditional legends. McFadden and Gbekobou (1984:225) say that grandparents are regarded as adequately qualified teachers to lay the foundations for education that will prepare the adolescent to live happily and comfortably, and to be useful to his society. Usually, grandparents are the best informed, the most patient and most readily accessible resource of information for young ones who are able to react naturally in their presence.

Where both parents are working and only come back in the evenings, communication break-down can result between parents and adolescents. Parents tend to take decisions unilaterally and this causes dissatisfaction in the adolescent. The differences between them generate misunderstandings and give rise to tension and conflict in the parent-child relationship. Mahdi et al (1987:84) point out that adolescents are involved in a struggle to become emancipated from parents; they want freedom to make plans, and to choose friends. In response, the parents become more controlling and restrictive. This exacerbates the hostility and conflict between the generations.

In general, a positive identification with the parent denotes a healthy relationship between the parent and the adolescent, and conversely a conflict between the parent and the adolescent results in an unhealthy relationship. Therefore, the parent - with his greater experience - his presumably clear insight into himself and

greater understanding of life, must take the initiative in keeping the relationship between himself and the adolescent harmonious.

#### *3.4.1.3 Relations with religious values*

Hurlock (1973:226) describes religion as consisting of two elements - first, a faith which is based on the individual's beliefs and secondly practices or religious observances in common with others of the same faith and centred around a place of worship. On the contrary, religion is not easy to define, especially in the context of black traditional life. Therefore, for the purpose of this presentation, the reader should keep in mind that the researcher thinks of religion as the product of man's effort to achieve a satisfactory adjustment to his world.

According to Conklin (1935:318) religious exercises are the means which man has developed to maintain or re-establish that feeling of satisfactory adjustment. Adolescence is recognised as a period of many adjustments. The religious adjustment is but one of many.

Through education, urbanisation and industrialisation, blacks over the whole African continent are becoming detached from this traditional environment and exposed to modern life, in which Christianity and other religions play a very important role. These religions may be contrary to the beliefs and ideas of the traditional black people. In South Africa those black people who have been converted follow a Western-oriented life-style, both in urban areas and in some of the semi-rural areas in the former South African homelands. What really makes their religion difficult to define is that the same converts have recourse to their traditional religion in times of mishaps and disasters. Others make public pronouncements that they practise both religions.

According to Mbiti (1971:15), man lives in a religious world. The world and practically all man's activities in it are seen and experienced through a religious understanding. Since adolescence is a period of strain and insecurity, almost every adolescent needs a religion that can give him a faith in life and a feeling of security. Any religion that is consistent with ideologies that are applicable with the work-a-day world, can give the adolescent a faith to live by and can help him learn to withstand the conflicts and doubts so characteristic of adolescence. An adolescent needs a religion that is personal and meaningful to him as an individual.

Wall (1977:31) points out that the adolescent has to acquire a set of ideas, ideals, principles and value systems on which to base his behaviour. Adolescents without a value system to guide their thoughts and actions will always find themselves frustrated.

During the years of childhood, the parents' religion is accepted without question, but by late adolescence, doubts arise. Questions show that adolescents have doubts about the existence of God, biblical statements or the certainty of salvation. Santrock (1984:543) says they think about developing their own religious identities; they also think they can make their own decisions about religion.

An adolescent who is accepted by his significant others (e.g. members of the family and his religion) will accept himself and consequently be able to construct meaningful relationships outside the church and family circle, and therefore develop his self-identity. The formation of relations during adolescence becomes more and more important because they enable the adolescent to actualise his potential.

#### *3.4.1.4 Heterosexual relations*

The achievement of heterosexuality is one of the most important social goals of late adolescence. According to Rice (1984:309) heterosexuality may be defined

as "the adolescent and adult stage of development in which the individual's pleasure and friendships are found with those of both sexes". During adolescence, interest in sex grows and boys and girls seek more information about it. Vrey (1992:194) holds that adolescents enter the late adolescence stage without sufficient knowledge, because most of their information on sexual matters has been obtained from their peer group. Such information is inadequate and inaccurate in quality as well as quantity, and it hopelessly confuses the adolescent's attitudes and expectations.

The first developmental task relating to sex which adolescents must master is the formation of new and more mature relationships with members of the opposite sex (Hurlock 1973:245). Obtaining a partner of the opposite sex or getting acquainted and feeling at ease with such a person is a painful process for some adolescents because, during early puberty, boys and girls develop antagonistic attitudes towards members of the opposite sex.

According to Rice (1984:309) sexual maturity comes with a biological awareness of the opposite sex, a decline in hostile attitudes, and an interest in its members, as well as in activities in which they are involved. The new interest begins to develop when sexual maturation is complete, is romantic in nature and is accompanied by a strong desire to win the approval of members of the opposite sex. The boy's first effort is to tease by engaging in some sort of physical contact with the girl, for example by gently twisting her arm, or brushing her across the buttocks. The girl's response is often a culturally conditioned, predictable one - for example, screaming, running and pretending to be very upset. Boys are not very good at talking to girls, but they know how to roughhouse, so they use this method of making their first emotionally charged heterosexual contact.



#### *3.4.1.5 Relations with friends*

Adolescent boys are extremely eager to have friends of both sexes and are inclined to measure their social status in terms of their ability to establish friendships with their peers. Coleman (1974:91) defines "friends" as people with whom things can be done. Friendship is a source of companionship.

An individual's selection of friends depends upon his perception of himself and the nature of his needs. Cole and Hall (1970:113) accentuate that the most useful idea about the selection of friends is the notion that each individual chooses friends to meet his own emotional needs. The bond becomes firm if the chooser has qualities that meet the needs of the chosen. If not, the former hangs around the latter, who rejects him. Indeed, two friends often have the same personality profile and share the same backgrounds and interests.

The typical adolescent is very loyal to his friends. This loyalty is evidenced by the current unwillingness of many high-school students to report drug users in their own age groups. Jossely (1971:43) says that adults are often confused by this loyalty, seeing it as a defiance of social demands. For the adolescent, loyalty to others implies others will be loyal to him as well.

Cole and Hall (1970:359) also maintain that the adolescent conforms rigidly to his friends. He and his friends speak their own language, have their own mode of dress, and their own customs. He utilises his peer group as a problem-solving tool in many ways. This is possible because he can communicate with them in a way he cannot with adults; he can air his thoughts and ideas because their thoughts and ideas are as embryonic and as confused as his. Furthermore, their confused thoughts and ideas may be different from his and by a mutual sharing he and the others can make a final answer.

The relation of the adolescent to friends and members of the peer group will be referred to in greater detail in Section 3.6.

In this section it has become clear that a meaningful world-view is formed when the adolescent, by assigning meaning, forms relations with himself, parents, peers and friends, the opposite sex and religious values. Through the relationship structures, the individual is enabled to obtain mutual self-realisation and communal-realisation.

Taking the adolescent's relationship formation as a vantage point, it is necessary to view specifically the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boy by looking at those aspects of development in the initiation school which have an influence on identity formation.

### **3.5 IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE SOUTHERN NDEBELE ADOLESCENT BOYS - ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN INITIATION SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON IDENTITY FORMATION**

Since the purpose of this research is to investigate the role of initiation schools towards the identity formation of Southern Ndebele boys, it will not benefit this research to merely discuss the developmental task of adolescents, because these developmental tasks are just the same for all adolescents. Hence we should avoid repetition of the same information. Therefore the researcher has sought to discuss the impact of aspects of development which basically have an influence on the identity formation of Southern Ndebele boys.

But due to the lack of literature pertaining specifically to the Southern Ndebele adolescent, use will be made of literature pertaining to studies in Africa and in some respects Western countries. This information will be used as sources of

potential relevancy, where extrapolations to the world of the Southern Ndebele adolescent could possibly be made.

Before we discuss the aspects of development which have an influence on the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescents, it is important to take note of the fact that each Ndebele adolescent boy develops as a person-in-totality, and that this also incorporates different modes such as physical, affective, conative, social, cognitive and moral development. Although these modes are separated for the purpose of research, they are interrelated and occur simultaneously. None of the modes are more important than others although, for the purpose of this research, only the impact of those modes which have an influence on identity formation will be highlighted. But before this discussion, the effects of the three main phases of the initiation school on identity formation will be discussed.

### **3.5.1 The effects of the separation phase on identity formation**

In chapter two, it was indicated that the first phase of initiation is the removal of the candidate into a special and secluded place. In this way his connection with his mother, as her child, is broken off, and he becomes henceforth attached to the world of men.

According to Schutheiss and Blustein (1994:159) there can be no satisfactory individual identity experience if the child does not develop an awareness of himself as a being physically and emotionally separate from the mother. The first aspect of identity formation is the separation-individuation process. Separation-individuation is the increasing responsibility taken by the growing person for what he does and what he is, rather than depositing this responsibility on the shoulders of those under whose influence and tutelage he has grown up (Blos 1967:168). Kroger (1989:46) concurs by saying that a mother's job is to be there and then to be left behind, meaning that the mother's teachings to the male child should be available as a resource sometime in the future. Only in this way are adolescent

boys able to disengage from parental internalisation and seek their own vocational and romantic fortunes beyond the family doorstep.

In their investigation of the role of adolescent separation and parental attachment toward identity formation, Schuthesis and Blustein (1994:159) discovered that parental attachment plays a more pronounced role in the identity formation of women, while adolescent separation plays an important role in the identity formation of men, because during separation the child dies psychologically to childhood identity and the inner identity re-emerges. In this sense the childhood identity does not really die - it develops further, making the child a somewhat more dignified person. Childhood identity changes to an individual identity: he sees himself as a "dignified" man.

This necessary phase reminds us as parents of the necessity of releasing our adolescents from a sense of possession, so that they do not remain in the childhood phase for ever.

### **3.5.2 The effects of the threshold phase on identity formation**

During the threshold period transformation is effected, as the internal structure of the candidate's former identity is changed and a new one constituted; the initiate is exhorted to grow out of the darkness of unconsciousness and collective identification, and grow into a new dawning of consciousness in which he receives a "new" identity and a new persona.

Mahdi et al (1987:295) say as this period comes to a close, and the initiate begins moving into a final phase, a number of psychological features stand out and give this period a distinctive character. Initiates in this phase show a gradual solidifying feeling of who they are and what they want to do, replacing their sense of loss over who they can no longer be. And what was aimless wandering at the beginning of

this phase becomes more purposeful exploration of new possibilities for the future. What appeared to be new during the separation phase, and was struggled with during the threshold period, is now brought into the centre of self-awareness and becomes a more explicit and integrated part of one's identity.

Initiation rites provide a haven where strong emotions can be openly experienced, leading to transformation into a new identity and the developmental stages of growth.

### **3.5.3 The effects of the reincorporation phase on identity formation**

Reincorporation is the last phase of the transition in ritual form. It is the celebration of the re-entry of the adolescent into the community. Reincorporation continues what was begun towards the end of the threshold phase and sees it to completion.

As this third stage develops, individuals gain a sense that the conscious identity (the self) is now a more authentic and accurate reflection of the whole personality than before: they feel that their lives now express a "fuller selfhood" than before the threshold-phase transition began.

Apart from the effects of these three phases of initiation on identity formation, it was indicated in the introduction to this section that there are also modes of development which have an influence on the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele boy. But in this case only their impact on identity formation will be discussed.

#### **3.5.4 The developmental aspects of a Southern Ndebele adolescent boy during initiation**

After a bull has been castrated, a number of physical bodily changes can be discerned. Its height and weight, skeletal and muscular size increase rapidly. Similarly, after a boy has been circumcised, a number of physical and life-affecting changes also occur. According to Eiselen (1932:72), once the surgeon cuts off the prepuce he has implicitly removed all that is childish and you become a man. This denotes the beginning of new life with a new identity. The implication is also that the adolescent experiences within himself physical, self-image, social, sexual and psychological changes.

According to Conger (1991:89), a central problem of the adolescent period is the development of the sense of identity. This requires a feeling of continuity over time - of being similar to, and having consistent links with the person one was previously and will be tomorrow. The Ndebele boy is faced with a sudden rapid change that threatens this feeling of consistency. Conger says the adolescent needs time to integrate changes into a positive, confident personal identity. Therefore a Ndebele boy, during his two-month stay in the circumcision lodge is given ample time to integrate these dramatic changes into a positive identity. He has to adapt to these changes.

During their stay in initiation camps, Ndebele initiates are exposed to physical trials and sufferings through which the guardians test their endurance, and their physical and psychological maturity, as well as prepare them for the rigors of life. They are also made to engage in strenuous physical activities. This results in an increase in their physical strength and motor co-ordination due to the increase in muscular size, skeletal growth and body weight. These physical developments will enable them to develop positive body attitudes and sees themselves as strong and masculine. If they accept themselves as such, positive self-concepts will be developed.

Stevens-Long and Cobb (1983:19-20) point out that children become aware of their physical attractiveness, or lack of it, very early in life. During adolescence this awareness becomes acute as adolescents are critical observers of their own bodies and those of their peers - of either sex. As they develop physically they constantly compare themselves with some approved normal standard that is either imagined or socially determined. In the initiation school the "ideal" standard is to have a strong, muscular body that enhances one's masculine identity. Those who cannot achieve an "ideal" body shape will do everything possible to hide the feature they dislike and enhance those features they regard as acceptable to their peers. This is just an attempt to obtain a positive body image. Failure to experience a positive body image leads to a negative self-concept, and a lack of self-esteem (Hurlock 1980:228).

Because there is a growing indication that adolescents are exceptionally concerned about their general physical appearance, initiation school guardians, parents and teachers should recognise this sensitivity and provide appropriate guidance.

Hormonal changes during puberty also lead to the maturation of reproductive organs. Landy (1984:447) says puberty marks the beginning of physical maturity, during which time the genitals grow and assume their mature size, shape and position. These developments assume special meaning during adolescence. Because adolescent boys lack sex education, to adolescent boys, the first ejaculation makes them worry that there is something physically wrong with them. This may result in the development of a poor self-identity because most have not yet developed a full sexual identity. Biller (1975:174) states that adolescents are in a particular need of sexual information before and during adolescence. Therefore, the initiation school creates a climate in which young men can be educated on sex and the mechanics of reproduction. During the course of this education (as stated in paragraph 2.5), uncertainties and worries are cleared, and

ejaculation and erection become proof of masculinity. This influences male sexual behaviour.

#### *3.5.4.1 The impact of moral development on identity formation*

Hurlock (1973:246) explains moral development as a way in which adolescents increasingly internalise and act upon values, such as respect and reverence for their parents, teachers and older persons, as well as honesty, modesty, and charity - which all form part of their moral code of conduct. This includes customs, manners, modes, patterns of behaviour, and conforming to norms set up by the community and culture.

During the course of initiation Ndebele adolescents are taught various rules of conduct. Moral instruction is one of the vital elements found in their curriculum. They are not only taught to observe particular rules of behaviour while still in the initiation camp, they also receive formal instruction about the conduct expected of them once they are "men".

The Ndebele adolescent learns what is regarded as right or wrong from his guardians or the elders of the lodge. They interpret for him the moral codes of the community and punish him when he violates them. Monteith, De, Postma and Scott (1988:138) argue that the adolescents' powers of reflective thinking enable them to evaluate what they learn. As a result of becoming more independent, with a higher level of cognitive development - which originates in their ability to think on a more abstract level and their willingness to think for themselves - adolescents are no longer able to accept the norms and values of their educators and community without examining their validity. Due to their critical attitudes towards themselves, these young men wish to personally analyse norms and values and reach their own conclusions about what is right and wrong. In this way they construct their own moral codes.



It is unfortunate that Monteith's argument does not hold water in the Ndebele initiation school. Here it is the responsibility of the guardians to direct the initiation activities and the behaviour of the initiates. Traditional education is transmitted to the initiates by the guardians and senior members of the lodge. It emphasises the acceptance of the norms and values of the community and does not give initiates the scope to evaluate its validity. Mahdi et al (1987:11) indicate that the passivity of initiates towards their guardians, and their malleability (which is increased by submission to ordeals) are signs of a process of being ground down, to be fashioned anew.

Ndebele initiates can sometimes act unreasonably (like all growing children) - for instance stealing stock in the neighbouring homestead, being dishonest, playing truant and cheating. According to an Ekangala informant (5 June 1997), during the Ndzundza initiation in 1997 a group of initiates was shot dead by a white farmer near Bronkhorstspuit when they attempted to steal sheep from the kraal. The farmer has since expressed his deep regret at this unfortunate incident. He said: "Ek is baie jammer. Ek het nie geweet hulle is bergskool seuns nie."

In many such cases (as stated above), this is an attempt by adolescents to prove their independence when thinking and taking decisions. What may appear to be unreasonable behaviour often indicates the adolescent's desire to be more independent. Grobler (1972:208) postulates that such a behaviour should be approached and handled with empathy by those in authority, including the initiation school guardians. As educators they are obliged to assist young people in anticipating and identifying the consequences of unreasonable behaviour, and should encourage them to act according to the moral responsibility they are compelled to accept as maturing adolescents and adults of tomorrow.

At the initiation school the initiates who behave in an acceptable manner are often rewarded, in various ways. Others receive positive remarks from the guardians and

elders of the lodge, and yet others are awarded presents as a token of appreciation for their good behaviour and endurance during the reincorporation ceremonies. The positive response received from other people fosters a sense of being accepted in the Ndebele adolescent, and this serves as a source of encouragement and self-confidence. This feeling of confidence helps to form a positive self-identity.

#### *3.5.4.2 The impact of social development on identity formation*

When the Ndebele boys are separated from their mothers before circumcision they form a clique to produce an exceptionally strong band of boys who will be circumcised together. It is very often from among this group that a boy chooses "his best friend" or "his blood brother". These are peers who remain inseparable friends for the rest of their lives. In this way an initiate attempts to establish some security in a relationship. The best friend becomes a source of support and a confidant. The importance of friendship is emphasised by Ackermann (1990:284) who writes: "for the person to discover himself as an individual he must be able to place the self into relation with the other selves. One does not lose individuality in a relationship, but gains a sense of self through it".

The initiate within the social context of the initiation school is obliged and compelled to recognise, accept and respect the identities of others. Le Roux (1989:71) emphasises this view and says "in as far as a person's identity becomes progressively established in the context of his relationship with other people, respect for his own identity needs to carry with it respect for the identity of others".

The ability of the initiates to achieve a clear sense of identity depends largely on the kind of relationships they have had with their parents. In the initiation school the initiates are more likely to establish a clear sense of identity if there is a rewarding, interactive relationship between themselves and the guardians of the camp, and if

both parties provide models of a confident sense of their own identity and a mutually supportive relationship with each other.

At the end of the course the Ndebele initiates are given the name of their regiment or age group or set. This regiment has an enormous impact on the initiate and upon his developing a sense of self. A positive identity is partially achieved through involvement with others. Through the support of the members of his age-set, the Ndebele initiate is able to gain involvement and establish an identity. Brown, McDowell and Smith (1981:18) concur by saying that many adolescents initially establish their identity by associating themselves with a group. Within a group, healthy relationships are formed. Adolescents within a group are given a certain status that may be seen as a positive attribute, and which earns a certain amount of esteem and respect. It is this amount of esteem or respect that may help a Ndebele initiate to form a positive identity.

The aspects of development discussed above appear to have a positive impact on the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele adolescent boy if they are developed optimally. Apart from these aspects of development, identity formation may also be influenced by certain factors within the initiation school situation. These factors influencing the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele adolescent boy are discussed below.

### **3.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE IDENTITY FORMATION OF A SOUTHERN NDEBELE BOY WITHIN THE INITIATION SCHOOL**

In Chapter two the researcher has indicated that the initiation-school education can be likened to formal schooling because it familiarises the child with his own culture, so that he can function within that culture as an adult. As a school, it also contributes to the development of an adolescent's identity. We know for a fact that candidates for initiation approach the school with a mixture of fear and hope, pride

and anxiety and, as a result, have certain attitudes towards the school and school-learning. It is, therefore, very important that the factors playing a role in an adolescent's formation of an identity be established. In order to successfully identify himself with the school and its activities, the adolescent has to become fully involved. Vrey (1992:49) refers to the factors influencing identity formation as significance attribution, involvement, experience and self-actualisation. These factors and the way they influence identity formation are discussed below.

### **3.6.1 Significance attribution**

Van Rensburg and Landman (1988:482) maintain that man's involvement with the world is a matter of personal meaning-acquisition and meaning-attribution, through which objects, people or relationships acquire a personal significance. Significance attribution occurs on the affective (emotional), cognitive and normative levels. It coalesces as a hierarchy of personal meanings in the experiential knowledge of the child. In simple terms, significance attribution refers to the meanings given to all things and relations by the child.

The initiate at school has to give meaning to the subject matter, peer group and guardians. He will then be in a position to know and understand that aspect of his world known as "school". Once he understands and knows, he will be in a position to construct meaningful relationships and develop his identity, which will be based on how he views himself in relation to learning, school, guardians and fellow-initiates.

The relationships, concepts or ideas that have been understood make learning meaningful. This view is held by Vrey (1992:31) who says, "if an object, situation or concept is meaningful, it must already have been meaningful to another person". Meaning can be discussed only on the presupposition that there is a person who understands. It exists only in the mind of someone who understands. There are cases where slightly mentally retarded initiates are also admitted in the initiation

schools because tradition enforces it. Because they cannot understand everything that is being taught, the content becomes meaningless to them. The usual criteria are that such candidates are made to undergo the circumcision operation with others, but are disengaged in theoretical matters. That is, they are excluded in the learning activities which involve the intellect.

The initiate understands and appreciates guardians who are interested in him as a person and who want to know if he is feeling well, if he is progressing in terms of physical healing, whether he enjoys being in the initiation school or if there is anything that disturbs him. The initiate assigns a special meaning to such a guardian and this makes him appreciate the school. This type of relationship is healthy and influences the initiate's identity development positively.

### **3.6.2 Involvement**

According to May (1970:243), involvement may be defined as the psychic vitality with which a meaningful objective is pursued and achieved. It depends largely on the child himself - his involvement in the task of living and developing - whether his potential is actualised or not. Van Niekerk (1982:3) mentions that "to be involved" implies that one is consciously concerned with the realities of the world. It is through involvement that the adolescent's activities or actions define his identity. In other words, the adolescent has to be involved in his learning process. In the process of learning he experiences his identity as a learner. Vrey (1992:46) says "identity implies action and action implies identity".

In the initiation school the initiate is involved in activities which give him pleasure and prestige, such as singing and dancing and sometimes even hunting. His self-image is elevated if he receives constant positive feedback from guardians and fellow-initiates. The positive feedback he receives causes him to view himself as a capable person. He therefore develops a sense of adequacy with regard to school activities.

Swanepoel (1990:98) says a pupil has to be involved with learning activities before he can form an identity. According to Malulyck (1978:360) "each pupil learns better when he is actively involved in the didactic situation". The situation in the initiation school can be likened to the didactic situation in the sense that the learner (initiate) is actively involved in all the educational activities whilst the guardian (educator) does the teaching. According to Stuart, Van Niekerk, McDonald and De Klerk (1985:7), didactics as a science is concerned with teaching in its entirety, and therefore the initiation school situation is also a didactic situation.

Sometimes initiates are involved in certain roles. They are given the opportunity to take responsibility and participate in the activities of the initiation school. An initiate may be chosen to be a caretaker or a firemaker. These activities involve the child and prepare him for adult social roles.

### **3.6.3 Experience**

Tylor (1950:41) defines the learning experience as the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he can react. Van Rensburg and Landman (1988:347) say it is an essential means by which the child realises his potential of learning and becoming. Learning takes place through the active behaviour of the child; it is through what he does, and what he learns. As the child experiences reality, he attributes meaning to it and these meanings coalesce into his experiential knowledge.

In the initiation school the image of the self is formed by one's interaction with significant others and through experiences of various kinds inside and outside the school. According to Matseke (1981:38), accumulation of experiences assists the child to gather more information about things and events and thereby enlarge and refine his initial body of concepts. To the initiate, undergoing circumcision is an experience on its own. Initially he did not have any knowledge about the

circumcision school, because everything related to it was kept secret. Now that he is in the situation, he experiences it and attributes meaning to it.

In the initiate's experience, his positive identity formation is reinforced by those activities he believes he has done or can do successfully. The perception of what constitutes success is formed by the initiate against the background of his positive involvement with the tasks. Having endured the most painful operation of them all, having braved cold temperatures and withstood the sufferings and ordeals, must give him a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. This implies that his identity must be positively reinforced.

#### **3.6.4 Self-concept**

Lloyd (1985:115) defines self-concept as those aspects of ourselves which we can consciously identify as "me" - physical attributes, personal characteristics, skills, values and hopes. It is a composite image of what we think we are, what we think we can achieve, what we think others think of us, and what we would like to be. (Burns 1979:3, and Rogers 1985:45.)

On entering the initiation school the initiate attributes meaning to the subject matter, fellow initiates and guardians, he becomes involved in the tasks of becoming and learning; he experiences the phenomenon of initiation before he actualises himself as a person. Upon his self-actualisation a stable sense of identity is formed. Self-identity in turn refers to his conception of his body, of himself as an initiate, of his achievements and skills both within and outside the initiation school. Each identity component is evaluated, so that self-conceptions vary in quality. The initiate who excels in singing and dancing or in reciting the secret formulae (in the form of rules) considers that "I am a good singer and dancer" or "I am intelligent". Self-concept comprises the totality of all the components of self-identity. This self-concept encompasses a combination of all the identities the

initiate has formed so far: identity as an Ndebele, as an initiate, a learner, a friend, singer or dancer, as well as a reciter.

According to Vrey (1992:168), since the body-image is a vital component of the self-concept, the adolescent's preoccupation with his body is quite comprehensible. Self-concept includes far more than his body-image, but at the same time the influence of this body-image on the self-concept is more important than one might expect. It is by way of the body that one relates to the world and to other people. An uncircumcised Ndebele adolescent boy, for instance, is painfully hesitant about forming social relationships with his circumcised counterparts because, in the context of the Southern Ndebele culture, an uncircumcised male is regarded as a social outcast.

Mol (1984:28) stresses that it is important that the adolescent establishes a healthy feeling of self-worth, as he wants to be accepted and esteemed by himself as well as others. In this respect, interpersonal relationships and the evaluations made by others have a considerable effect on the development of his self-concept.

Vrey (1979:47) mentions the following three roles of self-concept:

- it is a means of attaining inner stability;
- it determines how experiences are interpreted; and
- it determines the expectations the individual has for life.

### **3.6.5 Self-actualisation**

Maslow (1971:169) explains self-actualisation as the helping of the child to develop to the fullest height that the human species can attain (i.e. helping the child



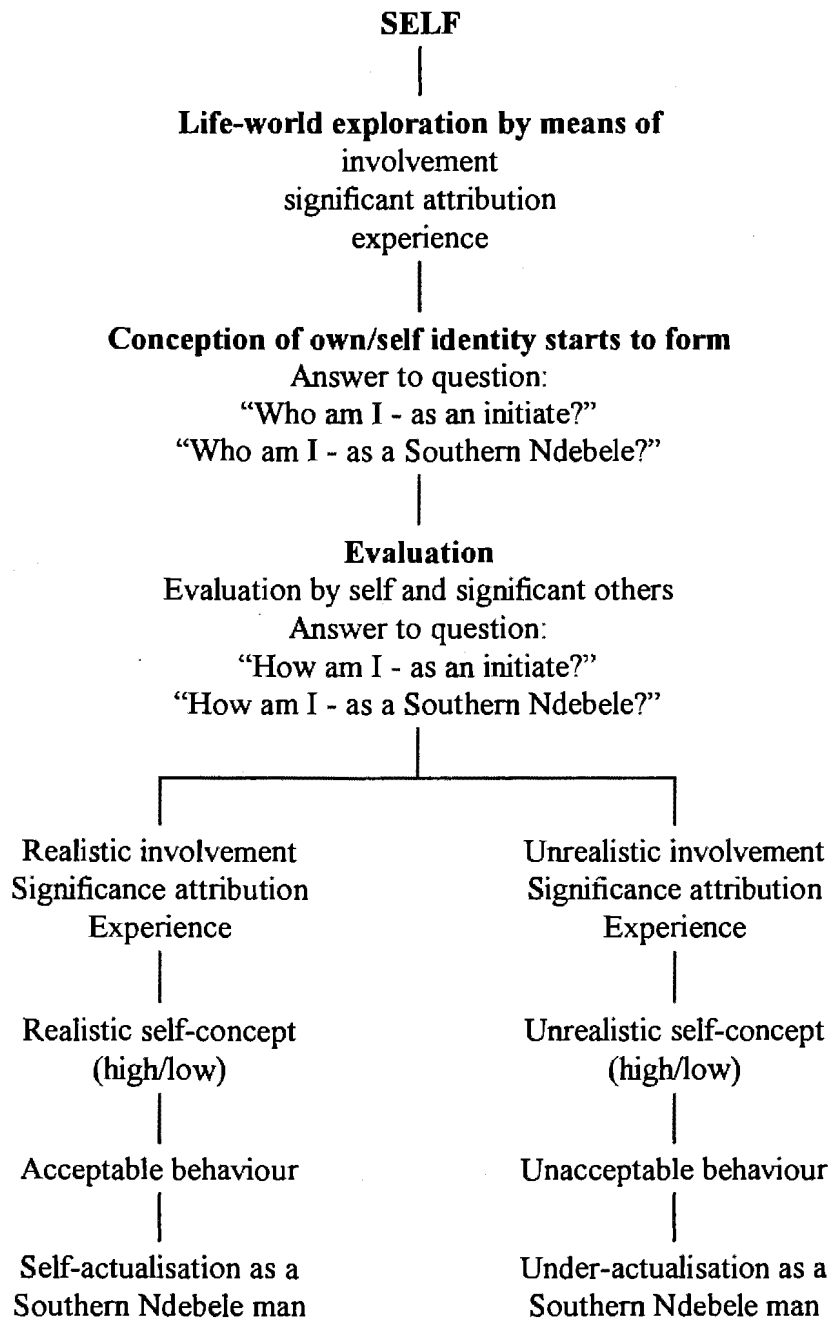
to become the best he is able to become). Meaningful self-actualisation is based on attribution of meaning, involvement and experience (Vrey 1992:98).

In the researcher's experience, both as an initiate and as a guardian of the 1993 initiation school, the initiate who does not have commitment may eventually run away from the initiation school - irrespective of the tightness of the security. An initiate who is not committed may not be able to memorise all the prescribed rules and formulae that must be learned by heart and reproduced when needed by instructors. Failure to reproduce the previously learned material is followed by punishment.

Achieving success develops a sense of satisfaction. An initiate who succeeds in satisfying most of the demands of the school receives approval from the guardian, which attaches meaning to the initiate's achievement. The adolescent also enjoys praise, which encourages him. In this way his identity is positively influenced. Through praise, the adolescent finds himself in a better position to actualise himself.

Attribution of meaning, involvement, experience and self-actualisation results in the formation of a positive self-concept which in turn results in the formation of a stable sense of identity. The process of self-concept and identity formation is summarised with the aid of a schematic representation given below:

**FIGURE 3.2: IDENTITY AND SELF-CONCEPT FORMATION OF THE SOUTHERN NDEBELE INITIATE**



The above schematic representation is in turn explained below:

Since becoming a man and development towards manhood are inconceivable without orientation, the initiate has to orient himself to his "new life-world". He explores and orients himself by means of continual involvement, significance attribution, and experience. Once the initiate becomes aware of the self, conceptions of an own identity arise. He gets to know himself. This self-identity comprises the answer to the question: "Who am I - as an initiate?"

Apart from his self-evaluation, an initiate also anticipates the judgement of people he esteems for his self-image. The evaluation from the people he esteems comprises the answer to the question: "How am I - as an initiate?". This gives rise to the subjective standards by which he evaluates his total identity. His identity is evaluated as good or bad against his own subjective standards. If he sees himself as good he develops a positive identity and a positive self-concept; if he sees himself as bad he develops a negative identity and a negative self-concept.

In the designation of the process of self-concept and identity formation, the realistic and unrealistic situations are used to indicate the two poles of success and failure. Under real conditions the initiate successfully actualises himself as a Southern Ndebele man while the unrealistic conditions result in the under-actualisation of the initiate as a Southern Ndebele man.

Upon his graduation the Southern Ndebele initiate finds himself in a community in which he must inevitably play a role. His newly achieved sense of identity must supplement the role he has to play in the community. Vrey (1992:192) endorses the view that identity and role supplement each another. The role requires a specific person, who in turn must identify himself with the role. This topic is discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **3.7 ROLE EXPECTATION**

According to Gerdes et al (1988:370), young men are continually searching for meaningful values in life since they have to assume socially responsible roles to be able to take their rightful place in society. However, each culture provides its own set of objectives and standards of conduct for the maturing adolescent. For instance, upon his graduation at the initiation school, the Ndebele adolescent boy cannot be saddled with full responsibility because he is still dependent in too many ways, though, in the Southern Ndebele context, the period of dependence may be legally over at the end of the initiation school. The training necessary to enable him adapt to the demands of contemporary industrial society requires that he remain in a subordinate role for a comparatively long time.

Therefore, after his graduation the Ndebele adolescent boy finds himself trapped in the ambivalence of an independence-dependence state. As a consequence he has a bewildering number of roles to play - for example, he has to juggle the roles of boy, friend, scholar and traditional adult.

#### **3.7.1 The role of the adolescent as a boy**

Before we can discuss the role of the Ndebele adolescent as a boy, we need to consider for a moment the concept of "role". Taken from normal usage, the concept is defined by De Levita (1956:97) as the dynamic aspect of status - status in turn being defined as someone's position within a structure. De Levita further refers a "role" as the behaviour which belongs to a particular position.

In the Ndebele cultural context one may never be totally liberated from the child role with regard to one's parents, but it is primarily during adolescence that one's efforts are directed towards being a child of one's parents. As a boy and a son of his parents, the youth has an obligation towards them until at their death. Schapera (1978:15) has mentioned that a boy is expected to behave respectfully towards his

elders throughout his life. Parents also help the adolescent to learn his many different roles - as a boy, a brother of younger siblings, a friend or a traditional being. By helping within the family the Ndebele adolescent learns domestic roles of significance for both sexes.

In the case of a traditional family, the Ndebele adolescent may serve as a surrogate parent. He is a senior to young siblings. As a senior he is in a position to delegate all sorts of work to the younger siblings and they have to obey. He also acts as their caretaker, their teacher, their playmate and their confidant. If pleasant relationships emanate from this interaction, they can contribute to the younger sibling's sense of security, belonging and acceptance. If the boy himself also feels useful, accepted, and admired because of the care he gives younger children, this added appreciation and sense of usefulness contributes positively to his own sense of self-worth. Rice (1984:394) concurs that many adolescents learn adult roles and responsibility by having to care for younger brothers and sisters while growing up.

### **3.7.2 The role of the adolescent as a friend and member of a peer group**

Following their new status, initiated boys would no longer make friends with uninitiated boys, since they consider them too young to keep company with. Brown et al (1981:19) says that, during adolescence, there is an increasing desire for closeness with others of the same sex. The adolescent attempts to establish a security in relationships by developing a "best friend". This "best friend" becomes a source of support and a confidant. In the case of the Ndebele adolescent boy this best friend is chosen from his regiment group because friendship with one's best friend wards off the torments of loneliness that can be experienced - even in a group. This regiment or age-set group can be referred to as a peer group because it refers to boys who are about the same age and status and operate more or less on the same scholastic, physical and cognitive level.

According to Vrey (1992:164) friends are vital for self-actualisation during this stage of life. The adolescent goes to school with his friends, plays sport with them, goes to cinema with them, and relaxes with them in the schoolgrounds and elsewhere. His friends are both company and a sounding board for his ideas and opinions.

The Ndebele regiment groups usually organise into cliques - small groups of two to four individuals. Lloyd (1985:199) mentions that cliques play a vital role in structuring the adolescent's social activities. They provide the adolescent with a sense of identity by serving as a basis of comparison or a reference group. Through comparison, clique members learn about themselves and evaluate these experiences in schools, at home, and in the broader regiment group. Therefore, friends are very instrumental in influencing the adoption of one's own value system.

As a member of a particular clique, with his friends, the adolescent can help other young people acquire a clear, stable identity by assisting them in resolving conflicts within themselves and with others; he can teach them respect for competence, which is necessary for the acquisition of a high level of maturity and autonomy; he can also teach them how to act in social situations, especially in heterosexual relationships. Therefore, friends facilitate the development of a social, personal and sexual identity.

Friends exercise a great influence on a child's attitude and behaviour. His need to be accepted as a person leads him to associate with the group, and to do everything in his power to get them to accept him. Engelbrecht et al (1984:50) quote a popular saying among pupils, especially at high school: "I'd rather be dead than out." Friends provide the necessary moral support and protection against the adult world which is filled and dominated by so many different adult views.

According to Hamachek (1979:155) the peer group provides an environment for growth and the acquisition of knowledge about the self that the family is generally unable to offer, and which few individuals are capable of finding alone. The peer group also provides opportunities for other members to learn and try out new roles, to observe others experimenting with skills mastered and ultimately to revise skills previously mastered that have proved to be ineffective. It is during this time that youth want to become emotionally independent of their parents and to finally cut the apron strings (Mooney 1974:18). Ferron (1990:176) regards friends as a temporary prop to help adolescents build up a positive self-image as they enter the adult world. Friends further facilitate adolescent emancipation from the family by helping other youths to balance their ambivalent needs for independence and dependence.

According to Berns (1985:45) adolescents feel comfortable with friends on whom they can rely and whose judgements are respected. Friends are sources of information and advice, and they provide norms on aspects regarding social behaviour, dress, sex, drugs or school. Consequently adolescents learn to develop their own value system and standards. This is supported by Rogers (1985:169) who says adolescents' views are strongly modified by those of their friends. The unstructured free hours spent with friends affords adolescents the opportunity to develop role-taking skills. Time spent with friends involves egalitarian relationships and shared interests, which is more rewarding than the task-oriented relationships with their parents. Therefore, friends function as an important socialising agent in assisting fellows in their peer group in their personal development towards adulthood.

### **3.7.3 The role of the adolescent as a scholar**

On re-entering formal school, the initiated youth's task is to reconcile the traditional school and the formal school. The youth has graduated into "manhood", but he becomes degraded by the formal school system back to the

status of the child. Here, the educator's assistance is needed to solve the situation, so that the youth can play his role as a scholar in an atmosphere conducive for learning. The formal school must never be seen as a replacement for the initiation school - instead it must continue to build on those foundations that were laid both at home and in the traditional school. The education task of the school is greatly facilitated when certain basic habits and attitudes have already been fostered in the learner.

Engelbrecht et al (1984:165-6) maintain that, as a learner, the adolescent must conform to the image that the teacher presents. The image reflected by the teacher is one of the adult world, an image which serves as a model for the child to become an adult and independent. In the classroom situation this image is constituted by, *inter alia*, the teacher's sense of humour, his interest in pupils and his empathy with the child who is experiencing problems. On the other hand, the teacher's attitude can also be instrumental in undermining the child's dignity as a human being. The teacher who, for example, openly criticises those who have attended or intend to attend the bush school can have a detrimental influence on the quality of such a child's involvement in the art of learning.

The Star (10 June 1993, p. 17) for instance, mentions the following complaints by teachers about initiation schools: initiation disrupts schooling; pupils miss classes when the time for initiation comes, and many initiates cannot cope when they return to school; and sometimes newly circumcised boys are bullies and give teachers a hard time. The result is that mutual trust, which is a fundamental condition for education to occur, is lost. The newly circumcised pupil (initiate) cannot improve, his scholastic achievement deteriorates, and his already stabilising self-identity and hopefully positive self-concept are threatened. The courage to make up for lost time in the formal school and the necessary self-confidence to venture and face the challenges which the future holds for him all fade away.



The adolescent must accept his role in the school with insight and responsibility - developing a sense of responsibility by taking a stand. Engelbrecht et al (1984:170) says he must want to explore his own life-world, and to expand the boundaries of his existence even further. The child is developing and this takes place on a higher level, day by day, and while he is learning he penetrates the boundaries of his learning situation. Bent (1970:376) stresses that the child achieves this by participating actively in the activities inside and outside the classroom. To use a practical example in the secondary school situation: every part of the subject which a pupil masters in Agricultural Science brings him a step closer to the ideal of becoming a successful farmer or an agriculturist one day.

The adolescent must also play his role as a learner by participating unselfishly in extramural activities. This may include athletics, drama, speech festivals, parties and dances, involvement in student bodies and sport activities. Saddler (1948:268) says participation in drama should be encouraged to promote sound character formation. Drama may prove to be a source of great pleasure to adolescents. Through participation in student bodies, the adolescent practises techniques of government, and plays a role in the conducting of school affairs (Cole & Hall 1970:566).

According to Lerner and Spanier (1980:48), secondary school places a high value on sport activities. Athletics, soccer and netball teams provide a basis for much of the social life of the adolescent. Participation in sport teams may be the primary force which motivates the adolescent to remain at school. For other participants, sport may add dimensions to their lives which enhance personal and social development. For non-participants, it still provides an opportunity to be a part of something by attending sport events and sharing in a victory (or loss) through what has come to be known as "spirit".

### **3.7.4 The role of the adolescent as a traditional adult**

Upon graduation from the initiation school the Ndebele adolescent gets a new traditional name. This newly initiated youth feels that it is no longer proper for the younger siblings to call him by his childhood name - only his parents and older siblings may call him by this name. To the Ndebele adolescent, this new name and status may be seen as a positive attribute which earns him a certain amount of esteem and respect. It is this amount of esteem that helps him form a traditional identity.

Ndebele initiation is clearly a sign of union with particular roles and a mark of membership of a certain social group. The adolescent is expected by the traditional community to engage in decision-making, and to show efficiency in executing his tasks inside and outside his community, because he is going to be a guardian at the next initiation school. He should, therefore, become a role model to the candidates of the next initiation school. According to *The Star* (10 June 1993, p. 17), the adolescent can now take part in the clan or tribal meetings and enjoy the pleasure of drinking beer and associating with the circumcised men of his or other age-set groups.

After the termination of the initiation school each initiate is entertained at a welcoming party by his parents and relatives in which they encourage him to get married or go back to school. Those who take up the first option must accept the task of procreation through the family units. They must also accept responsibilities as providers for, and protectors of, their families and communities. Gerdes et al (1988:99) also supports the acceptance of these tasks because the initiated boys have acquired the capacity for intimacy, love and concern. They may also be able to relate to others with warmth and compassion.

But this adolescent who is expected to function according to the traditional modes of behaviour is also exposed to modern life styles. For instance, he mixes with a

variety of boys (both from rural and urban areas) - even those who have been circumcised in hospitals. This enables him to evaluate the difference between traditional and modern life styles.

All over the world life is changing, evolving, modernising and radicalising. Change is upon us with a vengeance, no matter what, and we should try as best we can to adapt by understanding. With more complex political systems and increasingly advanced technology it is as if man is becoming more insecure, less sure of who he really is, or was, or will be. Under such conditions individuals, ethnic groups and nations experience crisis in identity.

According to Tessler, O'Barr and Spain (1973:vii-viii), along with modernisation goes a pervasive and false idea that the "less developed" must become like the "more developed" in order to achieve what they desire. To become like others is to become less like one's self, and a possible side-effect of such a social change is a denial of the value of one's own cultural heritage, which results in a sense of inferiority. Russia, Japan and China are often referred to as models from which contemporary nations can learn a great deal. Japan industrialised without Westernising, and traditional culture in Japan is supported by masses. The question that emerges is: in order to use modern technology, must a people accommodate the social structure, political ideology, cultural style, and other cultural attributes (such as the circumcision rites) of those who have this technology?

Tessler et al (1973:ix) point out that, for people going through rapid social changes, many of these changes may be unconscious. These people are, however, compelled to make a choice, because they must. Our Ndebele adolescents, for instance, are compelled to choose whether to maintain their long-term interest in the traditional life style or adapt to the changes brought by modern science. One must decide consciously or unconsciously whether one clings to the traditional

order - unchanging in its ways - and becomes a "social adult" (i.e. a man in the true sense) or one chooses the modern life and remains a "social infant" for the rest of one's days.

As a boy and a child of his parents, the Ndebele adolescent boy learns adult roles and responsibility by acting as a caretaker, teacher, playmate and confidant of his younger siblings. As a friend he functions as an important socialising agent in assisting those in his peer group in their personal development towards adulthood. As a learner he participates in extramural activities and student affairs, playing a role in the conducting of school affairs. As a traditional being, the adolescent boy identifies with all the traditional roles in the community. In all these instances the adolescent identifies himself with a particular role. Hence we say "identity" and "role" supplement each other.

### 3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a general meaning of the concept "identity" has been established. The identity development of the adolescent was discussed by using both Erikson and Marcia's identity status paradigm. It should be mentioned that both Erikson or Marcia's phases contribute to the formation of the next phase, but also contribute directly to the establishment of a well-defined identity. The concept of adolescence was briefly discussed with regard to the adolescent's relations and their influence on identity formation. It was pointed out that the ease with which the adolescent is able to achieve a clear sense of identity depends on the types of relationship he has had and continues to have with his parents. A healthy adolescent self-image is a product of a good balance between effect and control on the part of the parents.

Considerable emphasis was put on the identity development of the South Ndebele adolescent. Here, the discussion of those aspects of development which influence identity development were centred around the initiation school. Factors that

enhance identity formation in the real formal-school situation - namely, significance attribution, involvement, experience and self-actualisation - were evaluated against the initiation school situation to see if the initiation school is really engaged in the formation of the adolescent's identity. A positive relation was noticed.

Since the Ndebele adolescent finds himself in the ambivalence of independence-dependence and the conflict of being exposed to modern and traditional life styles - more emphasis was put on his role as a boy and a son of his parents, a friend and a member of a peer group, a scholar and a traditional being.

Although a positive relationship was noticed between initiation schools and identity formation, an empirical investigation will be conducted in order to ascertain this state of affairs. This investigation is discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature study on identity and the initiation school, and the school's influence on the identity formation of the Southern African Ndebele adolescent boys, has been reflected in previous chapters. This research specifically aims at the investigation of the role of the initiation schools towards the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. The subsequent influence of the initiation schools on scholastic achievement has also been of interest to the researcher.

There is also a need to select a research method to investigate the role of initiation schools on the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. The term "method" in this work is used with the original meaning attached to it in Greek, namely "meta + hodos" = "the path along which" or "the way by which" (Du Plooy, Griessel & Oberholzer, 1993:211). This implies that a researcher must select a method that will permit access to the phenomenon, and would further point towards a systematic procedure in analysing the phenomenon (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein 1994:442). The empirical data which is obtained through the use of such a research method can give scientific support to the findings made in the literature study.

To acquaint the reader with the method to be used, a brief overview of the background and development of the qualitative approach will be given. A brief comparison of the qualitative and quantitative methods will also be given.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

### **4.2.1 Qualitative method**

Lemmer (1992:292) maintains that, traditionally, researchers preferred to use quantitative methods in educational researches. According to Chesler (1983:17), it is the success of these methods in the natural sciences that has led to a belief that they could eventually solve all educational problems, including those of human sciences. As a result, educators attempted to use scientific techniques and exact measurements from the natural sciences to solve problems of education. Chesler also states that educationists started to realise that the quantitative method cannot be applied indiscriminately in educational research. Lemmer (1992:292) further maintains that during the past two decades, qualitative methods, field-research, interviews, participation observation or case study research began to be widely used.

According to McNeill (1990:66), Bogdan and Biklen (1992:10) qualitative researchers such as Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973), Radcliffe-Browne (1881-1955) and Malinowski (1884-1942) began to supplement their statistical analyses (quantitative approach) of social problems with detailed descriptions, interviews, sketches and photographs of social settings, thus using qualitative techniques to depict social problems in human terms. Further developments in the qualitative method were made by an American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who urged educationists to make first hand observations of school life (Bogden & Biklen 1992:10; McNeill 1990:4).

In human science research, the study of human beings presents the researchers with challenging problems since the research is directed towards exploring, describing and explaining human thoughts, emotion and behaviour - but more importantly, those characteristics that are not easily measurable by any other means (Ferreira 1988:42). In human science research it appears that cognisance has been taken of the total person, including a study of those features which can easily pass unseen

(Masemann 1976:368). The likelihood of some features being overlooked may be reduced by the use of qualitative methods.

According to Philcox (1990:99), at the most basic level qualitative and quantitative methods are sets of different research techniques, each with its own potential advantages and limitations. They can be (and often are) employed simultaneously in a given study, but can take on a different status, depending on the overall research approach.

Birn, Vangelder, and Hague (1990:230) maintain that the most obvious distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is in the form of data presentation. Quantitative research presents statistical results represented by numbers. In contrast, qualitative researchers present facts in a narration, with words.

Berdie, Anderson and Nubuhr (1986:13) suggest that the choice of method to use in a particular situation should be made by considering the overall nature of the research, rather than because of preconceived notions regarding which method is "better". When writing about the choice of method, Reeler (1985:34) refers to Van Wijk who states categorically that there "is no single road leading to truth, no single method of transmitting or promoting knowledge".

In this research work, a qualitative research method is used because the researcher collects data through sustained contact in settings where subjects normally spend their time. Qualitative research is humanistic - the researcher as a data-gathering instrument talks with subjects, observes their reactions and feelings, and records the information so obtained. Qualitative research may further employ some data-collecting techniques. According to Philcox (1990:100) qualitative techniques involve more open-ended, "free-response" questions, based on informal, loosely structured interviews, observations or diaries.



After a thorough consideration of various factors related to this research, the researcher selected interviewing as a data-collecting technique that would best fit the unique nature of the task. Therefore, interviewing was selected to uncover the thoughts, perceptions and feelings experienced by the subjects. During interviewing, the researcher attempted to set aside his personal views, prejudices, philosophy of life and suppositions to allow the subjects to express themselves freely.

In the section below the interviewing is briefly reviewed.

#### **4.2.2 Interviewing**

Stewart and Cash (1985:7) define interviewing as a process of dyadic, relational communication with a predetermined and serious purpose, designed to interchange behaviour and involving the asking and answering of questions. Essentially, interviewing is a means of gaining access to information of different kinds. It is done by asking questions in a direct face-to-face interaction. Interviewing can take a variety of forms. Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1970:89) distinguish interview models into structured, unstructured and semi-structured models. Structured interviews are predominantly used in surveys by social researchers. Unstructured interviews refer to interviews in which neither the questions nor the answer categories are predetermined. They rely on social interaction between the researcher and the subject to elicit information.

A semi-structured interview is an interview in which all questions are specified in advance, but the questions are typically in open-ended form (free-answer questions) and there is extensive use of probing techniques. Semi-structured interviews are conducted over a period of anything from 15 minutes to one hour, during which very detailed questions are asked to guide the interview process. This is the type of interview that would be used in this research, because the

content of the interview is focused on the issues that are central to the research problem, and questioning and discussion allow for greater flexibility.

Despite the fact that interviews are popular, and form a significant part of many interactions among people, they also have certain disadvantages. These disadvantages - as well as the advantages - are listed below.

#### *4.2.2.1 Disadvantages of interviews*

- Interviews depend on what the subject has to say. The interviewee may be unwilling to reveal information in his possession (Keats 1993:12).
- Open-ended questions may generate more information than is needed (Stewart & Cash 1985:17).
- The interviewer cannot guarantee that the interviewee is telling the truth, and whether his definition of the situation is accurate (Minichiello et al 1990:98).
- The interviewee may distort, either intentionally or otherwise, the information he does present (Bingham & More 1959:64).

#### *4.2.2.2 Advantages of interviews*

- Interviews may supplement questionnaires, applications, and other written responses (Stewart & Cash 1985:119).
- Interviewing in a face-to-face situation provides us with the opportunity to observe a person's responses to a wide range of behaviour (Stewart & Cash 1985:20).

- Interviewing provides us with the opportunity to obtain information about the person, place, or idea directly from a particular person (Black & Champion 1976:353).
- Interviews can be warm and supportive, in contrast to the impersonality and disinterest of forms and questionnaires (Keats 1993:13).
- Interviews have flexibility (Philcox 1990:20).

Although interviews are classified as structured, semi-structured and unstructured, the fact is that all interviews must have a structure of some kind. For research interviewing it is extremely important to have a carefully constructed interview schedule. This concept is briefly explained below.

#### *4.2.2.3 Interview schedule*

The interview schedule contains the structural principles and techniques which should be used by the researcher. It determines the course of the interview through its content and questions which will lead to obtaining the information desired. It is the interviewer's most important tool and deserves a great deal of care in its construction.

Bingham and More (1959:65) say there are some general principles and techniques that may serve as guidelines for effective interviewing. They suggest the following should be taken into consideration:

- Prepare a schedule or list of questions.
- Take pains to phrase those questions so that they are easily understood.
- Make appointments with interviewees.

- Establish a relationship of confidence with every interviewee.
- Provide privacy during interviewing.
- Help the interviewee to feel at ease and ready to talk.
- Ask questions at first that are not likely to cause a refusal to answer or provoke any form of negativism.
- Obtain an opportunity for observation.
- Record all data at once.
- Keep control of the interview.
- At the close of the interview, watch for additional information, or new leads in the casual remarks of the interviewee.

#### *4.2.2.4 Construction of the interview schedule for this study*

The interview schedule for this study consisted of a list of questions divided into three categories - namely initiation questions, identity-formation questions, scholastic-performance questions, and one casual question for obtaining additional general information.

The explication of the respondent's performance in the examination was as follows:

- 80 - 100 = star
- 70 - 79 = excellent

- 60 - 69 = very good
- 50 - 59 = good
- 40 - 49 = fair
- 30 - 39 = poor
- 20 - 29 = very poor
- 0 - 19 = bad

The questions in the interview schedule were as follows:

**A. *INITIATION QUESTIONS***

1. What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?
2. How did it feel to be separated from your parents (mother) and left on your own, far from home?
3. How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?
4. What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?
5. What kind of relationships did you establish with other people?

6. In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

***B. IDENTITY QUESTIONS***

1. Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?
2. What did you especially admire in this person?
3. Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?
4. What does the new name you have attached to your own ~~self-praise~~ poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?
5. As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?
6. Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?
7. Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?
8. How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

**C.        *SCHOLASTIC PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS***

1.        Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?
2.        If yes, what did you do to make up for the lost time?
3.        What was your final examination average for 1997?
4.        How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

**D.        *GENERAL QUESTION***

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation schools as well as initiation schools in general?

The above questions are all the questions asked during the interview process and were asked using exactly the same wording and order for each interviewee. However, the researcher made provision for probing in order to facilitate smooth progression of the interview towards its goal.

An interview schedule containing purposeful questions, which are well planned in advance, is called a highly scheduled interview (Stewart & Cash 1985:69). This is the type of interview schedule used in this study because it takes less time, is easier to replicate, and also easier for novice interviewers (like this researcher) to conduct.

Minichiello et al (1990:133-134) say the most commonly used interview techniques are tape-recording and note-taking. Sometimes they are used in combination. One can take notes during the interview or, if one thinks this is disruptive, rely on memory to reconstruct the conversation and transcribe it into an interview. In this research work both tape-recording and note-taking will be used, and the results of the interview later are interpreted. All the principles and techniques applicable were utilised during the interview, to the researcher's best ability.

The respondents referred to in this study were selected from the Southern Ndebele population. The group is called the "research sample". This concept is discussed briefly below.

### **4.3 THE SAMPLE**

According to Mulder (1989:55) a sample is a group which is selected from the population and is thus smaller in number than the population. This is done to give the researcher a more manageable group for purposes of research. A sample is thus a subset of a population. Mathunyane (1992:126) maintains that the manner in which a sample is selected determines how representative the sample is of the population of interest. Therefore, it is extremely important that individuals included in the sample constitute a truly representative cross-section of individuals in the population. Mulder (1989:58-9) further says that sampling include various methods such as random, systematic, stratified, and cluster sampling.

#### **4.3.1 The sample for this study**

The researcher has actually long established an intensive relationship with his subjects. He frequently visited them in their circumcision lodges when the initiation school was still in session. This was done to get the subjects to know him, establish a level of trust and goodwill so that they would disclose their feelings to him when the time of interviewing came. Interviewing was intended to be done



after the termination of the initiation schools, as the subjects would be more relaxed in their familiar environment.

The research sample consisted of ten subjects from both the Manala and the Ndzundza circumcision camps. The subjects were randomly selected from the entire population of each initiation school included in the sample. The subjects were selected on the basis of being adolescents, learners, who would return to their respective formal schools at the end of the initiation school. Initiation schools were also randomly selected from five areas in KwaNdebele: two Manala initiation schools and three Ndzundza initiation schools. The interview with each subject was done at his home and with the permission of his parents, and the subject was assured that the content of the interview would remain confidential.

The sample in this study is truly representative of the Southern Ndebele population. The general principle is that, if a sample has been selected so that it is representative of the accessible population, findings from the sample can be generalised to that population. Therefore, having selected a representative sample of the initiated Southern Ndebele adolescent boys, one can make generalisations concerning the role of initiation schools in the identity formation of all Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. However, in this study only ten boys were selected and generalisations cannot be possible - only tendencies can be described.

The researcher conducted interviews with ten initiated adolescent boys and adhered to all scientific guidelines, principles and techniques applicable to interviews. The findings and the results of these interviews are discussed below.

#### 4.4 THE INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The theoretical investigation laid the foundation for the empirical investigation, which revolved around investigating the role of initiation schools in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys.

The responses emanating from the questions in the interview schedule were recorded and later interpreted by the researcher. The responses of the ten subjects now follow.

##### 4.4.1 Subject No 1: Std 6, 15-year-old boy

###### 4.4.1.1 Initiation questions

QUESTION 1: What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

RESPONSE: He says he could not enjoy the company of, or free discussion with circumcised boys of his own age group. He further says that they labelled him as an "ishuburhu" (contemptuous name for an uncircumcised person).

INTERPRETATION: People who are not circumcised are regarded as outcasts in Ndebele communities. It seems to be accepted by his peer group this boy had to comply with the norm of the group (which is to be circumcised in this case).

QUESTION 2: How did it feel to be separated from your parents (mother) and left on your own far from home?

RESPONSE: He says in the first five days he felt lonely and homesick. But later on he started to get used to the new environment.

INTERPRETATION: The experience of separation from home and loneliness is one of the factors that creates a sense of identity. It seems that, as the boy got used to the new environment, he started to develop an awareness of himself as a being physically and emotionally separate from his parents and this could enhance the development of an individual identity experience.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: He says he was tense and anxious, uncertain of how he would react during and after the operation.

INTERPRETATION: Unlike other candidates, he appeared to have some idea of what was going to happen to him.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: He says he has now fulfilled one of the basic requirements for manhood among the Southern Ndebele - hence he would be able to take part in all the communal activities involving men.

INTERPRETATION: The prepuce is associated with childhood, and therefore its removal denotes transition into the men's world.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationships did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: He says he was very loyal to his fellow-initiates and guardians.

INTERPRETATION: It appears there was a relationship of loyalty between himself and his fellow-initiates and guardians. In the initiation school the initiates are more likely to establish a clear sense of identity if there is a mutually rewarding, interactive relationship between themselves and their guardians.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: As a person who loves music I was highly involved in all the activities, which include singing and the recital of laws and formulae.

INTERPRETATION: A child learns better when he is actively involved in the learning situation, moreover when he is involved with what he loves the most.

#### 4.4.1.2 Identity questions

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: He says he wanted to be like his classteacher.

INTERPRETATION: "Being like" the admired person reflects the mechanism of identification as the primary means by which the identity of the child is formed.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: He has also undergone the ritual of initiation and during the *kweperlatgevegtes* he would always emerge a hero.

INTERPRETATION: It appears this boy wants to identify with his teacher by adopting the role of a *kweperlatgevegter* or even by becoming a teacher in future.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: He still wants to be like his teacher in all respects, except that he (that teacher) comes to school on foot instead of driving in a car like other teachers.

INTERPRETATION: The boy still identifies with his role-model, except for his being a pedestrian. It therefore seems adolescents are capable of evaluating their role models critically, and then identify only with those aspects that suit their own personalities.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE:

*Ke Selati sa mapelapela, ga ke pele mothepe o mogolo, ke pela mothepe o monnyane, go ba ne o mogolo o tla ntšha kodumela.* His new name, "Selaki", means he, as a sexual being, has pleasure in making relationships with young ladies, rather than the older ones. The older ones will make him sweat.

INTERPRETATION: There is an indication that a heterosexual identity has developed.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE:

Among the Southern Ndebeles I have come to be known as Selaki - a sexually potent young man.

INTERPRETATION: It is characteristic of newly circumcised adolescent boys to describe themselves in sex-related terms.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: Yes, I have persevered in all the hard initiatory ordeals and was fully involved in all the hard masculine activities to become the fully recognised member of the community I am today.

INTERPRETATION: A person becomes what he is able to become through his involvement in activities that are meaningful to him.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: My friends and other boys of my age could not share all their discussion topics with me, and sometimes isolated me. But today they can share and discuss any topic under the sun with me. Thus I feel accepted.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to have gained a satisfactory sense of belonging because he is now accepted unconditionally by those who previously isolated him. This sense of belonging and acceptance has a positive influence on identity formation.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I feel as if freedom has dawned and I can do anything under the sun.

INTERPRETATION: He seems to have acquired experiential maps which will help him to explore the future with freedom and confidence.

#### *4.4.1.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I felt very overloaded with schoolwork. In difficult subjects such as Maths and Physics an enormous amount of work was covered in my absence.

INTERPRETATION: It seems more work was unfortunately covered in subjects in which was he experiencing problems. Perhaps he would use his determination as a man to act accordingly.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I used to remain behind and study after school. Where I did not understand, I would consult my teachers.

INTERPRETATION: The subject was at least doing something to make up for the lost time.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?



RESPONSE: My examination average for 1997 was 43 %.

INTERPRETATION: This average mark does not show that the pupil has experienced any disturbance.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from the 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My examination average for 1996 was 39,6 %.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to have performed better in the year he attended the initiation school than when he was free to attend for the whole year.

#### *4.4.1.4 General or casual question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation school or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: The food during the first five days left much to be desired. We were only supplied with soft porridge, mixed with pumpkin, which was served just on the grass. You had to scoop it up with your fingers, as no spoons were available.

**4.4.2 Subject No 2: Std 7, 15-year-old boy****4.4.2.1 Initiation questions**

**QUESTION 1:** What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** Initiation is part of our traditional culture. For the Southern Ndebele, it is actually an obligation to attend the initiation school. Failure to attend could result in one being made to attend forcefully - or at some stage when he is old.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems it is taboo for a Southern Ndebele to boycott the initiation school. That is why the die-hard supporters of the culture would even go to the extent of abducting unwilling boys to the initiation schools in order to force them to identify with the culture.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents (especially your mother) and left on your own, far from home?

**RESPONSE:** I felt I would never see home again. I also longed for mom's breakfast and tenderness.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems separation from parents has broken off the connection with mother, and the boy becomes attached to the world of men, with which he identifies.

**QUESTION 3:** How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

**RESPONSE:** My face twisted in pain and anguish before the actual time of operation arrived.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems circumcision is really a trial demanding bravery and stoicism.

**QUESTION 4:** What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

**RESPONSE:** I feel I have now become similar to all the Southern Ndebele men.

**INTERPRETATION:** He is justified in identifying himself as a man because he has fulfilled the basic requirements for manhood in Southern Ndebele - which is to be circumcised.

**QUESTION 5:** What kind of relationship did you establish with other people in the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** With my fellow initiates, we were engaged in a sort of a trust and co-operative relationship because, whatever task was assigned to us, we would do it together as a team. On the other hand, I gave respect to my guardians who in turn showed respect to me.

INTERPRETATION: A positive identity is achieved through involvement in relationships with others.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: Because of my love of cooking, I was highly involved in cooking food for my fellow-initiates and guardians.

INTERPRETATION: It is through involvement with the world around him that the adolescent's activities define his identity.

#### *4.4.2.2 Identity questions*

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like my brother.

INTERPRETATION: It seems children identify with any person in their immediate environment who has characteristics that greatly influence them.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: I liked his physical appearance - tall and strong. As a result of these features my brother enjoyed special respect from his peers and our siblings.

INTERPRETATION: It appears that what he admires in his brother is actually the respect and the enthusiasm which his brother received from his peers.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person even today or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: I still regard my brother as an ideal person in my life and admire every aspect of him.

INTERPRETATION: He identifies himself entirely with his brother. Nevertheless, his own identity (individual identity) will be formed when he comes to realise that he is a unique being, separate from his brother.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: *Ke Mosweswe ke a swaila, ga ke swaile fela, ke swaila matlakala.* (It means he is a sweeper, he does not only sweep, but also removes dirt. He is someone who cleans the community of corruption.)

INTERPRETATION: He appears to have developed pride and dignity in himself. This sense of personal worth helps to form a positive self-identity.

**QUESTION 5:** As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

**RESPONSE:** I am Mosweswe - a sweeper, an enforcer of law and order.

**INTERPRETATION:** The conception of himself as Mosweswe - a sweeper, appears to be held by both himself and the people he esteems. This is conducive to identity formation.

**QUESTION 6:** Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

**RESPONSE:** I think my mission has been accomplished. Since it is an obligation for every Ndebele child to be circumcised, I have become what is demanded of me by tribal culture.

**INTERPRETATION:** Through the curriculum of the initiation school he appears to have developed a cultural identity because he sees meaning in the established norms and values of the Southern Ndebele culture.

**QUESTION 7:** Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: Not only was I accepted by all members of the community, I was also treated in a new way.

INTERPRETATION: When you have complied with the set standards and norms of the community, under no circumstances may members of your community reject you.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I feel as if I have just celebrated my 21st birthday. I have never felt so strong and alive, like this, before.

INTERPRETATION: This type of excitement shows the beginning of a new freedom - a new status and a new self-perception.

#### *4.4.2.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I did not feel overloaded because not much schoolwork was done in my absence.

INTERPRETATION: At this school, it appears there is no difference between the child who was absent or present for two months.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up the lost time?

RESPONSE: It took me only two weekends to study the whole amount of work done in my absence.

INTERPRETATION: It seems this child is not challenged by the work that is done in class.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1997 is 58 %.

INTERPRETATION: It seems he has done generally well.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 examination average?

RESPONSE: My average for 1996 was 55 %, which is 3 % less than that of 1997.

INTERPRETATION: He performed slightly better in the year he attended the initiation school than in the year before.

#### *4.4.2.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation school or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: Initiation schools provide a situation in which a person can learn to smoke and to drink. It later gives him



freedom to smoke and drink with, or in front of, his parents as equals. However, every child has freedom of choice, as smoking or drinking is not forced upon anyone.

**4.4.3 Subject No 3: Std 8, 17-year-old boy**

**4.4.3.1 Initiation questions**

**QUESTION 1:** What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** I wanted to enjoy such benefits of adulthood as sex and participation in community affairs.

**INTERPRETATION:** His objectives tally with the saying in Ndebele: “until you go to the initiation school, you remain a boy”. Boys can therefore not participate in adult community matters.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

**RESPONSE:** I felt the time was ripe for me to separate from my parents and stand on my own feet.

**INTERPRETATION:** This subject appears to be ready to take his own decisions and accept responsibility for them.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I was ready for anything.

INTERPRETATION: The boy was fully prepared to make a transition from boyhood to manhood.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: To me a circumcised penis means I will benefit from pleasant sexual intercourse, free from infections due to the removal of the prepuce which usually traps dirt, causing diseases.

INTERPRETATION: Sex is meant for married adults. But it seems, according to him, as long as one's penis is circumcised one has a licence to engage in sex. There is also a perception that a circumcised person is not infected by sexually transmitted diseases. This perception has yet to be proved.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationship did you establish with other people in the initiation school?

RESPONSE: With my fellow-initiates I discussed anything, from relationships with religious values, to opinions which

could not be aired in front of our guardians. On the other hand I retained respect and trust for my guardians like I did at school.

**INTERPRETATION:** It is apparent that the subject has had an intimate personal relationship with his fellow-initiates and there was a relationship of mutual trust and respect between him and his guardians. Therefore, it seems in the initiation school a clear sense of identity is established if both parties establish a mutually supportive relationship.

**QUESTION 6:** In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

**RESPONSE:** During the teaching of special dances, shortly before the initiation dance, I assisted the guardians with some dancing skills.

**INTERPRETATION:** In his involvement with dancing the child gives meaning to reality in some way.

#### *4.4.3.2 Identity questions*

**QUESTION 1:** Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

**RESPONSE:** I wanted to be like the mayor of our town.

**INTERPRETATION:** The child's identification with significant others may result in him developing a strong sense of identity.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: Our mayor was one of the rich people in the area who was sympathetic to the poor.

INTERPRETATION: Children identify with the aspects of the role model that affect them the most. It seems this boy identifies with the sympathetic attitude of the mayor.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: There are certain aspects I still admire in him, but there are also certain others I want to discredit him for, namely: his autocratic attitude and his tendency to impose strict discipline on his business employees.

INTERPRETATION: If the adolescent is able to select and discard identity features in his role model, it means identity formation has occurred; if he identifies with all the features of the role model, it means identification is taking place.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My new name is *Leduka* *trakwena*, *kwen*a e patlame ka sebetse sa yona metsing, basadi ba e bona ba e tshaba.

*Leduka*

*Nna Leduka rrakwena, ka e batamela, ka e rema ka selepe mokokotlo.* In his praise-poem he says women saw a crocodile lying in the river, and they ran away. He came and hacked at it, on the back, with an axe.

INTERPRETATION: The killing of the crocodile mentioned in the praise-poem appears to mean that he identifies with bravery.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Leduka, who is brave enough to can kill a crocodile.

INTERPRETATION: The attributive value of bravery denotes his identity.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: Yes, I think so. Upon graduation I was told that I can, as a result of my new status, marry a woman of my choice and can take part in all adult community matters.

INTERPRETATION: This is exactly what influenced him to go to the initiation school. He seems to be nearing the point he wants to reach in his life - i.e. he has come nearer to self-actualisation.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: At the end of the initiation school every initiate is given a new name, to which a certain amount of dignity is attached. Members of the community accept, with special regard, all people with such dignified names.

*indanga*

INTERPRETATION: It appears that, as long as you have a new initiatory name, you have a special dignity. Therefore, all people with such names are accepted by their significant communities without contempt. An adolescent who is accepted by his significant community will accept himself and consequently be able to construct a meaningful identity.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I feel I can jump on top of the house and shout to everybody, I am a man!

INTERPRETATION: This is actually the social status he has anticipated for so long. It is not surprising if he acts a little crazy.

*4.4.3.3. Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel over-loaded with you schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I felt overloaded with the outstanding work, especially in Maths.

INTERPRETATION: If the child understood his problems and is able to identify his weak points, he can readily solve those problems.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: My Maths teacher, who was very eager to help me would assist me, when I experienced problems, during periods of extramural activities, as well as during her free periods.

INTERPRETATION: It appears as if we have a situation where there is a dedicated child who is helped by a dedicated teacher.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My final examination average for 1997 was 68 %.

INTERPRETATION: Despite his long absence from school, his performance is good.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: At the end of 1996, I obtained 70 %, which is 2 % more than this year's average.

INTERPRETATION: His 1997 results cannot be ascribed to his attending the initiation school because there is not much difference between the two performances.

#### *4.4.3.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about the conditions in the initiation school, or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: In the initiation school there is a mixture of good and bad experiences. The circumcision operation, which is the main theme of the initiation school, is a traumatic experience. I am therefore of the opinion that boys should be circumcised at hospitals and thereafter attend ritual teachings at the initiation school.

#### **4.4.4 Subject No 4: Std 7, 15-year-old boy**

##### *4.4.4.1 Initiation questions*

QUESTION 1: What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?



RESPONSE: Apart from initiation being part of our culture, circumcision is healthy.

INTERPRETATION: It appears as if initiation is not only a cultural phenomenon, but is also practised for health reasons.

QUESTION 2: How did it feel to be separated from your parents (mother) and left on your own, far from home?

RESPONSE: I felt the time was ripe to think about my own life and to choose my own way.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to be relieved from parental control and readily welcomes separation from his parents. Separation will enable him to identify with the outside world and hence to develop an own identity.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I was scared to death, but I told myself that I would not run away.

INTERPRETATION: This shows that he went to the initiation school with a purpose.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: A circumcised penis will enable me to identify with other Southern Ndebele men.

INTERPRETATION: It appears the circumcised penis is the basic identity feature that enables a boy to identify with men. As a circumcised man he can take part in all community activities that require men.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationship did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: I had respect for my guardians and their authority. I also shared similar views and interests with my fellow-initiates. Together with my fellow-initiates, I could not afford to respect the outdated rules taught by the elders of the lodge. Our relationship with them was just bad.

INTERPRETATION: The diminishing respect for the authority of the elderly people is characteristic of all adolescents. However, signs of an intimate relationship between the boy and his inmates and guardians is an indication of identity formation.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I used to assist other initiates to memorise the poems of their surnames and other laws, in the absence of the guardians.

INTERPRETATION: Through his active involvement in the intellectual activities, he gives meaning to his world.

#### 4.4.4.2 Identity questions

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like my father's younger brother.

INTERPRETATION: Small children are likely to choose their role-models within their families, or extended families and their next-of-kin. Therefore, for us to understand identity formation during adolescence we need to take into consideration these childhood antecedents.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: I liked his style of dressing.

INTERPRETATION: Adolescents are inclined to measure their social status in terms of their style of dressing. If his style of dressing meets contemporary social styles he regards his status in the peer group as well as in the society as very important. This enhances his self-esteem and therefore his identity - that is, it answers the question: who am I and what am I?

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: Apart from his greying beard and wrinkled face, I still admire the way he dresses.

INTERPRETATION: At adolescence the child is able to incorporate all the identification aspects that he still admires and discard those he dislikes. When he is able to do these, it may be said identity formation has occurred.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My self-praise poem says: *Ke nna Thulari theledi ya madiba, metsi ke a šapa jaaka sefodi, ke a phaya, ke a kgaphela kgakala*. He Thulari, is a swift-moving aquatic reptile; when he swims, water is cast aside as if spurted from a spray gun.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to identify with speed - symbolising an aquatic snake.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Thulari. I am fast, like an aquatic snake.

INTERPRETATION: This is the new image he has formed of himself.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: An Ndebele who has not yet undergone initiation is said to be incomplete. Before undergoing initiation I was also incomplete. I was only half of whom or what I wanted to be. But today I feel I have become whole.

INTERPRETATION: As a human being, he is meant to grow to become a complete human being and not to be a half-man. He has now grown to become a whole - the individual he is meant to be.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: My new status of an *isokana* - a newly circumcised person - has earned me unconditional recognition by all members of the community.

INTERPRETATION: Recognition by members of the community helps him to recognise himself - to know who he is, how he is, and

what he can do with his life. This adds to the achievement of an optimal sense of identity.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I feel I have found a place in the heart of the community. I have arrived home.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to be overwhelmed by what he has achieved.

#### *4.4.4.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel over-loaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: Much was done by the teachers in various subjects in my absence. Therefore, the workload was just too much to cover within the remaining period.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to be quite aware of the mammoth task ahead of him.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I suspended all my leisure pursuits.

INTERPRETATION: He seems to have shown determination to solve his workload problem.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My examination average for 1997 was 40 %.

INTERPRETATION: The results reveal a fair performance.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My average for 1996 was 36,5 % and I was given a conditional pass.

INTERPRETATION: His performance in the year he attended the initiation school was much better than in the year before. Therefore, it seems, initiation school did not hamper his scholastic performance.

#### *4.4.4.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation school or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: Initiation and modern society appear to be in conflict. The social standards are rapidly changing, while the traditional community still clings to the past. People

cannot afford to remain where they were a thousand years ago.

**4.4.5 Subject No 5: Std 9, 17-year-old boy**

*4.4.5.1 Initiation questions*

**QUESTION 1:** What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** I wanted to have a feeling of belonging and togetherness with the entire Ndebele community.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems that to have a feeling of belonging and recognition is of the utmost importance to the Southern Ndebele. If achieved, this feeling enhances identity formation.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

**RESPONSE:** I did not feel quite ready to ~~part with my parents~~. As a result, I felt I was being "pushed out of the door".

**INTERPRETATION:** Emancipation is traditionally a stormy time. Sometimes a child may consider himself ready but parents may not, and sometimes it is the reverse. If an adolescent has a feeling that he is being pushed out of the door, he develops a negative identity because he feels unaccepted by the significant others.



QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I felt I was between life and death. So many more questions than answers were ringing in my mind.

INTERPRETATION: The path to manhood was not as attractive as his keenness to become a man and be accepted by his community.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: To me a circumcised penis entails an increased sense of masculinity and the opportunity to engage in heterosexual relationships.

INTERPRETATION: Upon graduation boys who are financially independent are encouraged to marry. Therefore, it seems initiation schools encourage heterosexual identity.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationship did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: I have personally become committed to all the inhabitants of the initiation camp. I shared all my experiences with each one of them and in turn they did the same with me.

INTERPRETATION: He has formed an intimate relationship with his fellow-initiates and guardians. For real intimacy to be formed, a reasonable sense of identity has to be established. It therefore implies that a reasonable sense of identity has been formed in this boy.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I was mostly involved in singing and the reciting of the formulae.

INTERPRETATION: Every initiate becomes actively involved with an issue of which he knows something, as well as issues of his own interest.

#### *4.4.5.2 Identity questions*

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: My late father was my role model.

INTERPRETATION: The child's emerging sense of identity is formed on the foundations of his earliest identifications with one of his parents.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: My father was not educated but kept us (the family) united in solidarity - he taught us to give to each other and especially to love one another.

INTERPRETATION: He took heed of his father's teachings and treasured them in his heart. He seems to identify strongly with his father's ideologies.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: I still regard him as an ideal person in every respect.

INTERPRETATION: It seems the father had laid a good foundation because the boy continues to identify with his ideas, although he died long ago.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My new name and its poem are as follows: *Ké Sekwati se kopantsha ditšhaba, ke kopantse ba Masemola le ba Moletlane*. In this self-praise poem he maintains that he is Sekwati. He unites communities. He has united the Bamasemola and the Moletlane communities.

INTERPRETATION: The new name he has attached to his praise-poem appears to mean that he is someone who brings reconciliation among communities.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Sekwati. I can bring unity among people.

INTERPRETATION: Experiences in the initiation school have helped him find his way in becoming a person with a clearer sense of who he is.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: Yes, I now have a feeling of belonging and togetherness with the members of the community in which I was born.

INTERPRETATION: The achievement of self-actualisation appears to be the result of his understanding and the attribution of meaning too when he was orienting himself in his environment.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: Since the criteria for acceptance in the community of men is only through graduating at the initiation school, I got a sense of acceptance when, upon graduation, the tribal chief officially announced: "You are welcome to the community of men and the name of your regiment is the *tzhibha*."

INTERPRETATION: This sense of acceptance helps to form a positive identity in an adolescent.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I feel I have crossed from a state of innocence to a state of self-knowledge, and really feel a sense of achievement.

INTERPRETATION: The subject appears to have reached a crossroad or turning point in his life where he chooses to take his place as an adult member of the community.

#### 4.4.5.3 *Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with you schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: The workload was really too much for someone who was absent for so long.

INTERPRETATION: He understood and is aware of the situation in which he finds himself.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I worked very hard.

INTERPRETATION: The fact that he was behind motivated him to study hard.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My examination average for 1997 was 49 %.

INTERPRETATION: This was a fair performance.

QUESTION 4: How does the average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My examination average for 1996 was 42 %, which was 7 % lower than the 1997 performance.

INTERPRETATION: He performed better in the year he went to the initiation school.

#### 4.4.5.4 *General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation school or initiation schools in general?

**RESPONSE:** More and more people, including journalists, are calling for the immediate closure of initiation schools. But on the contrary, we see even older men, the so-called boy-men who did not attend during adolescence, are opting to undergo circumcision. In our initiation lodge, for example, there was a 38-year-old bus driver who came to attend with us.

#### 4.4.6 **Subject No 6: Std 8, 16-year-old boy**

##### 4.4.6.1 *Initiation questions*

**QUESTION 1:** What really influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** Two of my close friends went to the initiation school and so I decided to follow them.

**INTERPRETATION:** Sometimes adolescents conform willingly to their peer groups, because they need friendship - not just for security but for self-exploration, for learning about their own sense of identity, and for self-assertion.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

RESPONSE: Separating from my parents was a very lonely experience, but gradually I acclimatised to the new environment.

INTERPRETATION: Separation and the sensation of loneliness are factors in the creation of a sense of identity. If a person is alone he has time to think about himself - who he is, how he is, and what he can do about his life.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I joined the other initiates two days after the first circumcision day. As we approached the initiation lodge, I happened to see one boy who was writhing in pain from a wounded penis, and could not bear to look. I was tense and anxious, and also uncertain whether I was going to have the same done to me, like that boy who was writhing in agony.

INTERPRETATION: The subject went through a terrifying experience in his life. This experience, together with other emotional experiences (pleasant or unpleasant), helps transform boys into men.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in you life as a Southern Ndebele?



RESPONSE: The removal of the prepucce marked a turning point in my life. All that is childish has been taken away and I have become a man.

INTERPRETATION: It seems the removal of the prepucce marks an end to childhood and the entrance to manhood, and in this way the adolescent starts to identify with men.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationships did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: I did not have a good relationship with my fellow-initiates. My relationship with one guardian was also strained. But I resorted to forming close ties with the other guardian and the initiates of the neighbouring initiation group.

INTERPRETATION: The environment does not force a person to choose friends. A person chooses a friend to meet his own emotional needs. But an unfriendly relationship between this boy, his guardian and his fellow-initiates would not be conducive to identity formation, because he would not get adequate support from them to form a positive identity. Therefore, a possibility exists that he may develop a negative identity.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I was actively involved in all activities that included music, such as the singing of laws, formulae and war songs.

INTERPRETATION: Active involvement in the musical activities may enable him to identify himself as a singer. Therefore, it seems active involvement enhance the development of a self-identity.

#### 4.4.6.2 Identity questions

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: There is nobody I wanted to be like.

INTERPRETATION: Perhaps he has not yet come across an ideal person in his life.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: N/A.

INTERPRETATION: N/A.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: N/A.

INTERPRETATION: N/A.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My praise-poem goes as follows: *Ke Sengalela sa makgatla-mpane. Sengalela ke yo mosese fase, ke yo mokutu mafatlhegong.* According to his self-praise, he is a Sengalela who is a hardworker. Although his legs are thin, his face is broad.

INTERPRETATION: The new name attached to his praise poem means that he is a hard worker. It therefore means that the boy identifies with hard work. He also appears to have a positive self-image because of the attitude he has towards his physical appearance.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: My new identity name is Sengalela. I have slim legs but a broad face.

INTERPRETATION: He has a good perception of himself, and this self-perception will contribute to the formation of a positive self-concept.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: As I look back, I am surprised at how much I have grown as an individual. I went to the initiation school just because two of my best friends went. I am pleased I made that naive decision. I am also thankful for the friendships I developed, as well as my new understanding of other people.

INTERPRETATION: It is characteristic of a self-actualiser to be capable of understanding and assigning meaning to relationships.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: Not only my close friends recognised my new status, but the entire community accepted my newly acquired status.

INTERPRETATION: During adolescence, to be accepted is one of the basic structures of being human. This feeling of acceptance enhances identity formation in the sense that a person who is accepted by significant others will in turn accept

himself and this leads to the formation of a positive self-concept.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: I am proud to have discovered my roots and who I am.

INTERPRETATION: This is an indication that identity has been formed.

#### *4.4.6.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I only realised a few weeks before the final examination that the amount of work I still had to learn was too much.

INTERPRETATION: It seems on his return from the initiation school, he continued to learn at the normal pace of the unaffected learners, unaware of the workload ahead of him.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I wrote notes and tried to study all the missed work within the remaining period.

INTERPRETATION: It seems he did not lose hope, but looked forward to what the examinations had in store for him.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My final examination mark for 1997 was 42 %.

INTERPRETATION: This is a fair performance.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My final examination average for 1996 was 62 %, which is 20 % more than the average mark for 1997.

INTERPRETATION: Since there was a big difference between his 1996 and 1997 examination averages, perhaps his poor performance in 1997 can be ascribed to the initiation school.

#### *4.4.6.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation schools or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: There are numerous ordeals to which the initiates are subjected in the various initiation camps. These ordeals make life so difficult in the initiation school and that's

why initiates often think of escaping or committing suicide. In my opinion, all the ordeals in the initiation school should be abolished.

#### **4.4.7 Subject No 7: Std 8, 15-year-old boy**

##### *4.4.7.1 Initiation questions*

**QUESTION 1:** What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** I am not so sure exactly what influenced me to go to the initiation school, but partly I wanted to prove for myself all the rumours surrounding the initiation school.

**INTERPRETATION:** It was a brave initiative - to come face-to-face with the real situation. Nevertheless, he had every reason to believe in himself and follow his plans and curiosity.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

**RESPONSE:** I was homesick and lonely. I longed to see my mother, and nobody else.

**INTERPRETATION:** The mother is the primary love object. Therefore, it seems that to separate the boy from his mother is the first step to break down the resistance of the boy's ego, and make him receptive to new information and insights.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I felt a cold sweat running down my spine. I was nearly paralysed by fear.

INTERPRETATION: These spine-chilling experiences are meant to harden boys to men.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: I was already circumcised in the hospital, but did not belong to a particular regiment of the Southern Ndebele community. Therefore, I could not be identified as a man, but remained a boy-man.

INTERPRETATION: A person who is circumcised in hospital is still regarded by the Southern Ndebele community as a boy and a prospective candidate for initiation, because he does not belong to a recognised Ndebele regiment.

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationship did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: In the absence of my mother and next-of-kin, I was compelled to form close friendships with my inmates in order to avert loneliness.



INTERPRETATION: According to him, the environment and the prevailing circumstances forced him to enter into a close friendship with his inmates. In addition, a close friendship is a source of companionship, which in turn enhances identity formation.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I was involved in singing.

INTERPRETATION: This action or activity of singing defines his identity.

#### *4.4.7.2 Identity questions*

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like my uncle, with whom I lived for a long time.

INTERPRETATION: It's likely that a male child will always identify with a male identity figure.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: My uncle is a peace-loving person.

INTERPRETATION: It appears that, the boy himself also loves peace, because the adolescent child will always identify with those aspects of the role-model which affect him.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: Even today I still like everything about him.

INTERPRETATION: It appears he has found an irreplaceable role-model in his uncle who is an ambassador for peace.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My self-praise poem says: *Ke Matshila mathintha diatla, poo e ntsho ya Sepilonko, maila go fengwa.* I am Matshila, a black bull of Gazankulu, and indisputable fighter.

INTERPRETATION: His new name, Matshila, means he is a person who hates to be defeated by anything, and he also seems to attach his strong features to his bravery. Thus, the boy seems to be identifying with strongness and bravery.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and

how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Matshila, dark in complexion, tough and strong like a bull.

INTERPRETATION: According to his answer, his conception of his physical body, of himself as a new person, is very positive. He has begun to know and to accept himself. This identity of the self comprises the answer to the question, "who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele".

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: I have proved and I have seen with my naked eyes all aspects pertaining to initiation. I have also fulfilled a ritual which is almost inevitable among the Southern Ndebele, as a tribe.

INTERPRETATION: This experience of personal adequacy shows that self-actualisation may be reached.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: My new identity as a man not only made me accepted by the community, but also caused me to be treated in a new way.

INTERPRETATION: If the subject is accepted by his community as a new person with new social status, it can therefore be acknowledged that a new identity has been formed.

QUESTION 8: How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

RESPONSE: My self-confidence is very high, and a sense of who I am is very strong.

INTERPRETATION: He has undoubtedly developed a high level of self-confidence and a strong sense of identity.

#### *4.4.7.3 Scholastic performance question*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with your school work as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I felt heavily overloaded and never believed I would make it at the end of the year.

INTERPRETATION: He seemed to have lost hope and confidence in himself. This lack of confidence has a negative impact on his identity formation.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I tried to write down the notes of the work that I missed, but could not gather them all.

INTERPRETATION: There was a likelihood that the notes he failed to gather would affect his results.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My final examination average for 1997 was 32 %.

INTERPRETATION: His average performance is very low.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1996 was 39 %, which was 7 % more than the average mark for 1997.

INTERPRETATION: His performance for 1996 was better than that of 1997, although it was still below average, and therefore his failure cannot be ascribed to the initiation school.

#### *4.4.7.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation schools or about initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: I suggest that the period for initiation should coincide with the winter vacations for formal schools.

**4.4.8 Subject No 8: Std 7, 15-year-old boy**

*4.4.8.1 Initiation questions*

QUESTION 1: What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

RESPONSE: I did not want to go to the initiation school when I was in Grade 11 or 12. Therefore I have decided to go, against the will of my parents, as I was scheduled to attend the next initiation-school cycle.

INTERPRETATION: The subject showed determination and mature thinking. His thinking also seems to have been future-oriented. This is because he is aware of the significance of his ideas for himself, as well as their implications for his own identity.

QUESTION 2: How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

RESPONSE: I missed the tender care and the love of my parents.

INTERPRETATION: The adolescent who relies on parental love feels freer to take risks, to explore, and even to differ from them.

**QUESTION 3:** How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

**RESPONSE:** I was not nervous at all. Instead, what came into my mind was that my childhood was about to be buried.

**INTERPRETATION:** It appears the subject stood his ground and focused on the person he wanted to be.

**QUESTION 4:** What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

**RESPONSE:** A circumcised penis means that I am a man.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems circumcised genitals contribute to the formation of a sex identity.

**QUESTION 5:** What kind of relationships did you establish with other people?

**RESPONSE:** Although I got along very well with other initiates and my guardians, I chose among my fellow-initiates one friend who will be my best friend for the rest of my life.

**INTERPRETATION:** Friendship with a best friend averts the torments of loneliness that can be experienced, even in a group. The relationship with the best friend is meaningful and

conducive to positive identity formation, because the two feel at home with each other and feel free to share the most intimate secrets.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I was mostly involved in activities such as the recital of formulae and the interpretation of laws.

INTERPRETATION: Identity cannot develop if the child's condition is one of passivity or apathy. It is active involvement with objects, ideas, himself and others that gives rise to an involvement with the world.

#### *4.4.8.2 Identity questions*

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like my father.

INTERPRETATION: There is always a desire by parents that their children be like them and identify with their ideals.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: I admired my father for his active involvement in politics.



INTERPRETATION: If the father was active in politics, it could mean he was socially intelligent. Therefore, it seems the boy has inherited intelligence from his father.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: I still want to be like my father in all respects, except that I dislike his smoking habits.

INTERPRETATION: The mere fact that the adolescent is able to select and discard some of the earlier identifications from his mentor indicates that identity formation has taken place.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: *Thisila ya masogana, ke tshwana le ntjwa ya lepaku, fa nka uthwelela monko, ke o latelela go fitlhela ke bo ke sukolola sebody.* He, Thisila, is like a sniffing dog - if he can sense the smell of a dead animal, he follows until he finds the carcass.

INTERPRETATION: He seems to give his new name the meaning of an investigator - as he likens himself to a sniffing dog.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Thisila. I am like a sniffing dog.

INTERPRETATION: He seems to identify himself with an investigator.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: It is still too early for me decide that I have developed to the full height that I can reach, because the road to the future is still long.

INTERPRETATION: What he says is true and characterise him as a really intelligent child. But the facts that he sees himself realistically, he accepts himself, and has a strong self-esteem, also characterise him as someone trying to actualise himself.

QUESTION 7: Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

RESPONSE: I was accepted by my family first, despite having wronged them [by going against their wishes], my peers and the community at large.

**INTERPRETATION:** It shows that the subject did not mean to hurt his parents or threaten them. He felt free to deliberately go against their wishes, without fearing that they would reject him on his return. The ease with which adolescents are able to achieve a clear sense of identity depends on the kind of relationship they have with their parents.

**QUESTION 8:** How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele?

**RESPONSE:** I have never felt so strong before. I feel a deep sense of confidence, new social status and respect.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems as if he is experiencing a “second birth” - entering a new stage with a new identity.

#### *4.4.8.3 Scholastic performance questions*

**QUESTION 1:** Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence?

**RESPONSE:** I did not feel overloaded with my schoolwork.

**INTERPRETATION:** He appears to be a very intelligent child, because intelligent children do not feel challenged by prescribed work which may pose a challenge to an average child.

**QUESTION 2:** What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I did not make any special "operation make up", but just studied the missed work.

INTERPRETATION: He did not experience any problem in understanding the work done in his absence.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1997 was 77 %.

INTERPRETATION: One can justifiably say he is a very intelligent child.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1996 was 74 %, which is 3 % less than the final examination average for 1997.

INTERPRETATION: He performed exceptionally well in the year he went for circumcision, better than in the year before.

#### *4.4.8.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation school or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: At the end of the initiation school one has a feeling that he has achieved equality with adults. He is no longer a

child of his parents, but a fellow-adult. He consequently gains a recognition of being a unique individual in the community.

#### **4.4.9 Subject No 9: Std 9, 18-year-old boy**

##### *4.4.9.1 Initiation questions*

**QUESTION 1:** What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

**RESPONSE:** Younger boys in the village who had been to the initiation school were treated with respect by the older men of the tribe. In some social functions they would share food and drinks with them and they would send me to eat with small children. They say these are my peers. This humiliated me, because I was not actually against going to the initiation school.

**INTERPRETATION:** He was compelled by social pressure and an inferiority complex to go to the initiation school.

**QUESTION 2:** How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

**RESPONSE:** I felt a dramatic loss of motherly love and consequently I became depressed. But after five days I became settled.

**INTERPRETATION:** A child cannot develop a satisfactory individual identity experience if he does not develop an awareness of himself

as a being physically and emotionally separate from the mother.

**QUESTION 3:** How did it feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

**RESPONSE:** Since we were warned before that flinching or crying out was a sign of weakness and stigmatised one's manhood, I could not afford to look the man in the eyes, but stared down and buried my chin in my chest.

**INTERPRETATION:** The Ndebele initiatory ordeals require the initiate to confront fear and to withstand grievous pain, before he can cross over from adolescence to manhood.

**QUESTION 4:** What meaning do you attach to your circumcised penis in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

**RESPONSE:** To me a circumcised penis means I am on equal status with those who are identified as men.

**INTERPRETATION:** The transition from boyhood to manhood appears to begin when the foreskin is removed, following a ritual.

**QUESTION 5:** What kind of relationship did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: Together with my fellow-initiates, we formed a clique to produce an exceptionally strong bond of initiates. We had only one guardian. He was more than a guardian to us. He was a father, a brother and a friend all rolled in one. He always had time for us and we shared everything. He was a gentle soul who guided us through the turbulent initiation period.

INTERPRETATION: In a strong bond with fellow-initiates, he became involved with them and, through their support, could establish a strong identity. The positive ideas about their guardian's feelings towards them could also influence their identity formation positively.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: I like fighting. As a result, I liked singing war songs and the *kweperlatveg* songs.

INTERPRETATION: His love and involvement in the singing of war-related songs may make him form an identity as a warrior.

#### 4.4.9.2 Identity questions

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like my father.

INTERPRETATION: An adolescent always seeks a role model to mentor him in the realities of the corporate world. If this role-model is within the family, identification with it occurs with ease.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: His sense of humour and understanding.

INTERPRETATION: It seems the subject also has a sense of humour because children identify with those characteristics of people by which they themselves are immediately affected.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or there are only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: My father is still my role model, but I hate his strong belief in ancestors.

INTERPRETATION: In principle, if he can select and discard certain identifications from his role model, it means identity formation has occurred.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?



RESPONSE: My praise-poem is as follows: *Ke nna Matzela marangrang, ke loleme lo phate. Polelo ga ke e dikadike, ke e beya phaa!* He says he has an English tongue, when he talks he does not hide behind words, but calls a spade a spade.

INTERPRETATION: According to his praise-poem, his new name means he is an orator.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Matzela, an orator with weak eyesight, but a strong sense of hearing.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to accept how and who he is. Moreover, he accepts both his weaknesses and strengths.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?

RESPONSE: I have learned to accept criticism and at the same time to see the beauty in me and others. I think I have grown to the maximum point as an individual.

**INTERPRETATION:** An initiate is actualising himself if he experiences intense pleasure and pain, and also if he is totally involved with life.

**QUESTION 7:** Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

**RESPONSE:** My new identity made me more accepted to the members of the community. This is indicated by the respect shown me by those young boys who were initiated before me, as well as the elderly members of the community.

**INTERPRETATION:** It seems going to the initiation school is the fundamental thing to do if one is to achieve a sense of purpose and belonging in the Southern Ndebele community.

**QUESTION 8:** How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele?

**RESPONSE:** I have a feeling of being at peace, being a part of the community, and having a great respect and love for life.

**INTERPRETATION:** Finally, after a difficult time of humiliation, he emerged with a new identity, he was delivered into a new way of life - one filled with inner joy and peace of mind.

*4.4.9.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: I felt very overloaded, and suffered the consequences of abandoning formal schooling.

INTERPRETATION: The subject seems to put the blame on the initiation school.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I studied day and night, but the workload did not seem to decrease.

INTERPRETATION: It does not matter how long one spends at one's books, what matters is understanding. It seems the boy does not understand his work.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1997 was 34 %.

INTERPRETATION: This is a poor performance.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1996 was 38 %, which enabled me to obtain a conditional pass.

INTERPRETATION: It seems his performance is generally poor. Therefore there are many factors other than the initiation school that can be ascribed to his failure.

#### *4.4.9.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation schools or initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: To be honest, initiation schools are a health risk. Chances are that an initiate can be doomed to an abnormal sex life, because he could have his penis amputated as a result of complications after the operation. A possibility also exists for HIV infection, because one instrument is used to operate on many initiates.

#### **4.4.10 Subject No 10: 17-year-old boy**

##### *4.4.10.1 Initiation questions*

QUESTION 1: What exactly influenced you to go to the initiation school?

RESPONSE: Apart from fulfilling my cultural obligation, I wanted to be taught the ways of manhood - various rules of conduct and life rules to live by.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to be determined to keep the flame burning in the father's house, that is, to learn to sustain his forefathers' culture and traditions.

QUESTION 2: How did it feel to be separated from your parents and left on your own, far from home?

RESPONSE: I long for the folks back home but never thought of escaping. I have gradually learned to accept the situation.

INTERPRETATION: Without separation from the womanfolk, no identification with the men's world can occur, and there can be no learning of men's ways can occur.

QUESTION 3: How did you feel coming face-to-face with the surgeon who was to operate on you?

RESPONSE: I felt a sense of awe, mixed with bewilderment. I wanted to ask who he was and what his role was there.

INTERPRETATION: He seems to be in real predicament. It is true that candidates enter the initiation school without knowing what is going to be expected of them. Those who fortunately get leaked information do not believe it.

QUESTION 4: What meaning do you attach to your circumcised genitals in your life as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: It means I have satisfied one condition of being a man.

INTERPRETATION: It seems circumcision enhances the sense of being a member of the male sex (gender identity).

QUESTION 5: What kind of relationship did you establish with other people?

RESPONSE: There was a harmonious relationship between me and my fellow-initiates, and also between me and my guardians.

INTERPRETATION: The formation of good relationships with significant others is a fundamental process for mankind. It enables the adolescent to actualise his potential.

QUESTION 6: In which initiatory activities were you mostly involved?

RESPONSE: My passion for hunting compelled me to get involved in this activity.

INTERPRETATION: Action defines identity, and identity defines action. This adolescent is defined by his actions as a hunter.

#### *4.4.10.2 Identity questions*

QUESTION 1: Who did you want to be like when you were still a child?

RESPONSE: I wanted to be like our neighbour who was a game ranger and a musician.

INTERPRETATION: The child's emerging sense of identity is formed on the foundations of his earliest identifications with people who are most meaningful to him. It means his neighbour was a very meaningful person in his life.

QUESTION 2: What did you especially admire in this person?

RESPONSE: I liked his behaviour and his love of reggae music and hunting.

INTERPRETATION: Perhaps this is the reason why he identified with singing and hunting.

QUESTION 3: Do you still want to be like that person, even today, or are there only a few aspects in him that you admire?

RESPONSE: I don't want to be a duplicate of my neighbour, but there are some aspects that I still like and some that I dislike about him. I still like, for example, his passion for game and music, but dislike his dagga-smoking habits.

INTERPRETATION: It means identity formation has occurred in him because he is able to select some of the childhood identifications in accordance with his own interests.

QUESTION 4: What does the new name you have attached to your own self-praise poem mean to your identity as a Southern Ndebele?

RESPONSE: My praise-poems says: *Ke nna Thulari theledi ya masogana, ke tlhamaletse ba sa nthateng ba fatlhwa ke tlhamalalo ya me.* He, Thulari, leads an honest and reliable life. Those who hate him are blinded by his honesty and reliability.

INTERPRETATION: As he attaches honesty and reliability to his new name, it appears he will live by honesty.

QUESTION 5: As a person who has recently acquired a new community status, can you now answer the question: who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of the community?

RESPONSE: I am Thulari. A very honest and reliable person.

INTERPRETATION: He appears to have undergone a permanent change in his self-perception. This new self-perception is recognised and validated by the community.

QUESTION 6: Do you think the initiation school has led you towards self-actualisation?



**RESPONSE:** I have learned a number of things about manhood. About sexuality; about being a man and knowing what men must know to pass on. I have learned to be proud of who I am and where I come from. Therefore, I have undoubtedly become the person I want to be.

**INTERPRETATION:** Any rite of passage must be informed by some strong ethical standards. When one goes to the mountain one must return with something to live by. This adolescent seems to have achieved more than enough - self-discovery and self-realisation.

**QUESTION 7:** Does your new identity as a Southern Ndebele young man make you acceptable to other members of the community?

**RESPONSE:** I was accepted with enthusiasm, because I have been initiated into full tribal membership.

**INTERPRETATION:** It is this feeling of acceptance that contributes to the identity formation in an adolescent.

**QUESTION 8:** How do you feel to be a fully recognised Southern Ndebele man?

**RESPONSE:** My life has been turned to bright, from being previously dim. It's like a re-awakening.

INTERPRETATION: It appears as if after the process of initiation the initiate seem to feel like a totally different being from that which he was before the initiation process. He feels like a re-created being with a new identity.

*4.4.10.3 Scholastic performance questions*

QUESTION 1: Did you feel overloaded with your schoolwork as a result of your long absence from school?

RESPONSE: It was mind-boggling. I did not know where to start.

INTERPRETATION: It sounds like the work was too much for him.

QUESTION 2: What did you do to make up for the lost time?

RESPONSE: I reduced time for leisure and also used weekends for studying.

INTERPRETATION: He seemed to be determined to solve his problems.

QUESTION 3: What was your final examination average for 1997?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1997 was 37,6 %.

INTERPRETATION: His performance was below average, but he qualified to get a conditional pass.

QUESTION 4: How does this average differ from your 1996 final examination average?

RESPONSE: My average mark for 1996 was 40 %, which was 3,4 % more than the 1997 examination average.

INTERPRETATION: It seems the initiation school had a negative impact on his scholastic performance.

#### *4.4.10.4 General question*

Is there anything you would still like to add about conditions in the initiation schools or about initiation schools in general?

RESPONSE: At the end of the initiation school, your status as a new young man is irrevocable. That's why the accompanying ritual, namely the circumcision operation, is deliberately made painful. The new adult knows his new responsibilities will be permanently expected of him, and that he cannot excuse himself from them. In my own opinion, all youths should be initiated despite their cultural background in order to rejuvenate the entire community.

In the above section the researcher has portrayed the image of the initiation school as experienced by the initiates. That which is reflected concerning their interview responses or experiences in the initiation school is mainly in their own words, but summarised and sometimes rephrased. In the next section a brief summary of the results of the interviews is depicted.

#### 4.5 SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEW RESULTS

All subjects were motivated to go to the initiation school by reasons other than their traditional culture. This resulted eventually in their being accepted and recognised by their respective communities. The separating of the candidates for initiation from their parents caused a feeling of loneliness, sorrow and separation in some initiates (cf subjects 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10), yet two subjects (cf subjects 3 and 4) were psychologically ready to emancipate themselves from their mothers. It means they were ready to live an independent life, separate from their parents. However, the homesick subjects have after a short while also acclimatised to their new environment.

When they came face-to-face with the man doing the surgery, subjects 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 felt nervous, tense and anxious. Only two subjects, namely subjects 3 and 8, were brave enough to face the ordeal. Subjects 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10 maintained that their circumcised genitals meant they had fulfilled the most important requirement for manhood. Some subjects (3 and 5) maintained that they could now engage in pleasant sexual relationships. Only one subject was still bewildered - because he had been circumcised in hospital.

All subjects except only one (No 6) managed to establish intimate relationships with their fellow-initiates and guardians. All, including No 6, were actively involved in various initiatory activities.

No 6 maintained that he did not have any role model. But, nevertheless, all subjects had had role models since childhood, and admired a variety of aspects in their role models' personalities. Of these subjects 2, 5 and 7 wanted to identify only with certain aspects of their role models' personalities, but wanted to discard other aspects (1, 3, 4, 8, 9 and 10).

According to their self-praise poems, the new names of all the subjects had a positive meaning in their lives as Southern Ndebele people. All subjects responded to the question, “who am I and what am I?” with a clear sense of who and what they really were.

All subjects felt they were on their way to self-actualisation. That is, each one felt he was on the right track to reach his human potential. All subjects experienced a sense of belonging, cohesion and being accepted and appreciated by their communities. All were also overwhelmed with excitement about being recognised as full Southern Ndebele men.

A number of subjects (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10) felt overloaded with schoolwork as a result of their long absence from school. One of the two subjects (2 and 8) who did not feel overloaded appeared to be a very intelligent child. All subjects were aware of their backlog and determined to devise some means of catching up. Of the ten subjects, two failed the 1997 final year examination (7 and 9) and one obtained a conditional pass (No 10).

There were five subjects whose average mark for 1997 was more than that of 1996 (No 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8). That is, they performed better, despite attending the initiation school. There were also five whose average mark for 1996 was more than that of 1997 (4, 6, 7, 9 and 10). That is, they performed better when they had attended continuously for the whole year.

From the interview results, it follows that various deductions can be made. These deductions are discussed below.

#### 4.6 DEDUCTIONS

If all subjects were motivated to go to the initiation school, it means they were drawn into it (the initiation school) and therefore actively involved in it. It can therefore be deduced that the subjects wanted to understand and to be involved - they wanted to become men as a matter of course.

From those subjects who experienced feelings of loneliness, sorrow and of being separated from their mothers, it can be deduced that separation is similar to severance from the mother and the family, and indicates childhood and dependence.

When the subjects came face-to-face with the man who was to do the surgery, they became tense and nervous. It can therefore be deduced from their state of consciousness that circumcision is a personal, subjective experience, which can be evaluated as unpleasant but very important.

The subjects maintained that ritual circumcision denoted that they now met the requirement for manhood. It can therefore be deduced that the removal of the foreskin symbolises the idea of being "cut off" from childhood and being incorporated into the new world of men.

Since all subjects except one (No 6) had developed intimate relationships with significant others, it can be deduced that they had successfully managed to orientate themselves in the world. If a child is to orientate himself in this world - as he must in order to survive and mature - he must form relationships with objects, ideas and significant others.

From the subjects who said their circumcised genitals promised pleasant engagement in sex, it can be deduced that erotic admiration and sexual attraction

had emerged. During adolescence a boy-girl relationship is extremely important to the child's self-actualisation and self-reliance.

All subjects maintained that they were actively involved in various initiatory activities. It can be deduced therefore that involvement entails an action - either a psychological or a motor action. Involvement often requires practice and perseverance in the activities.

From the subjects who had had role-models since their childhood, it can be deduced that the child's emerging sense of identity is formed on the foundations of his earliest identifications with the role model.

All the subjects' new names have a connotative meaning. We can therefore conclude that every subject gave meaning to his identity as he understood it. If all subjects responded to the question: "Who am I and how am I", with enthusiasm, and with great confidence it can be deduced that they had all developed new perceptions of themselves as social and also as unique individuals.

At this stage all subjects are clearly on their way to self-actualisation. That is, there is an indication that each one is on his way to become the best he is able to become. From this we can deduce that his physiological and psychological needs are being satisfied, because the satisfaction of these basic needs is the driving force behind the urge to actualise one's potential.

All subjects experienced a sense of belonging and of being accepted by their communities. They were also excited about being fully recognised Southern Ndebele men. It can be deduced that since all are recognised and accepted by their communities, they will in turn accept themselves, develop a positive self-concept and a sense of community.

If subjects felt overloaded with their schoolwork as a result of their long absence, it can be deduced that the initiation school is responsible for the backlog. Because all subjects show a determination to make up the missed work, it can be deduced that they are not only entirely involved in the activities of learning, but are also interested. Finally, initiation schools do not appear to aggravate the high failure rate, because only two initiates failed the final examinations in 1997.

Before the researcher gives his interpretation of the interview results, it is essential to confirm that there can be many interpretations, from different points of view in the human science disciplines. It is accepted that the interpretation by the modern psychologist, the sociologist, the anthropologist and even the educator could possibly differ from that of the researcher. As indicated earlier, the researcher is only interested in investigating whether initiation schools play any role in the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele boys - particularly in KwaNdebele in Mpumalanga Province.

In the section that follows, the researcher will present his own interpretation of the interviews.

#### **4.7 INTERPRETATIONS**

As all subjects were motivated to go to the initiation school, it appears they attributed meaning to their objective of undergoing initiation. A child cannot form an identity if his condition is one of apathy or passivity. Identity formation entails intense involvement in the actions leading up to it.

To be transformed into a new state of being, with a new identity, one must leave the old condition. Separation from the mother therefore removes the initiate from the familiar surrounding that reinforces the old identity. The removal of the



foreskin also implies that the initiate's childhood identity has evolved to manhood, and he has become attached to the world of the ritually circumcised. The power of the ritual itself creates an unusual state of consciousness which acts as a sign, indicating that a change has occurred. The feelings conjured up when each initiate comes face-to-face with the surgeon evoke some deep sense of connection to his god. These feelings encourage the child to be involved as a totality and to be involved in every attribution of meaning.

The formation of relationships is a fundamental socialisation process for mankind. It appears during adolescence; the adolescent wants to relate to others and form a stable, mature and intimate relationship with them. The nature and quality of the resultant relations are determined by the meaning attributed to them. It appears that, in the initiation school, the adolescent comes to a stage where he begins to understand who he really is.

The subject's involvement in what he wants to do and can do, and his experience of the actual doing defines his self-actualisation. The mere fact that the child has had a role model since his childhood means he will develop a strong sense of identity. Again, if the subject answers the question, "Who am I and how am I as a Southern Ndebele", with a lively sparkle in his eyes and joy, and with a stronger sense of confidence, it means he has formed an identity.

If the child is able to select and discard identity features in his role model, it means identity formation has occurred, but if he identifies with every aspect of his role model, identification has occurred. He does not yet regard himself as physically and emotionally separate from his mentor.

If undergoing initiation is a cultural obligation, then an individual becomes the person he is meant to be by successfully undergoing authentic initiation. In his self-

actualisation and his building of a self-concept, the developmental factors of meaning attribution, involvement and experience can always be distinguished.

If all subjects are accepted by significant others and fully recognised as Southern Ndebele men, their radiating of a new self-confidence, self-respect, new inner strength, and a new community of support all contribute to the formation of an identity.

With regard to the subjects' scholastic performance, it appears the amount of schoolwork covered in their absence is too much, and therefore they need extra support from their teachers. Although the subjects seem to have developed a new identity as recognised cultural men, they further want to grow and develop academically. As the child studies further, he develops a positive academic self-concept that will enhance the formation of a positive self-concept in general. His newly formed identity will also start to stabilise. From the results obtained it is apparent that initiation schools do not have adverse effects on the scholastic achievement of the child.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter a thorough explanation of how the empirical investigation was done is given. A qualitative method, in the form of interviews was used to give scientific support to the findings made in the literature. Interviewing and an interview schedule were employed as data-collecting techniques to uncover the thoughts, perceptions and feelings experienced by the subjects under study. A detailed description of this technique (its advantages, disadvantages and application) was also given. Interviews were held with ten subjects selected from the Manala and the Ndzundza initiation schools.

The results of the interviews were obtained through note-taking and tape-recording. The interview results were summarised and later interpreted after deductions were made. In the next chapter the findings, conclusions and recommendations following this investigation will be made.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Studies such as this, which are concerned with life's transitions, not only explore a way to reconstitute rites of passage as a means of identity formation among adolescents, but also make adolescents aware of the importance of being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts. This is important to the new *Outcomes Based Education* system in South Africa, which is also geared to such critical outcomes. This is how it should be. Empirical research should have relevance to educational practice.

This research work aims to investigate the role of initiation schools in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. The purpose of this chapter is to give a summary of the main findings of both the literature study and the empirical research undertaken in this study. Recommendations from the literature study will then be made. Aspects that need further investigation will be discussed after problems experienced during the investigation have been outlined. Finally, a general conclusion will be made.

#### 5.2 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

The limited literature on the rites of passage has called attention to the increasing interest in the initiation school as a place for major change - a situation not yet adequately understood by modern society. This literature also contains an extensive explanation of the nature of initiation and initiation schools.

In Chapter 2 the researcher established a precise meaning of the concept “initiation”, because there is little agreement about the concept among authors (cf. paragraph 2.2.1). An in-depth exposition of the general historical background of initiation and initiation schools has been essayed. An exposition of the general patterns of initiation which characterises all rites of passage, as well as the educational and social role of initiation schools, was given before going into a more specific description of the different phases of the Southern Ndebele male initiation. Here, a detailed historical background of the Southern Ndebele people and their initiation patterns was tabled. Examples in this study were drawn from all over the world and through all ages, to show that initiation rites have occurred persistently and universally among mankind. The attitudes of societies towards initiation were reviewed before giving a critical analysis of the role of initiation schools by looking at their advantages and disadvantages.

From the general historical background of initiation in the literature study, it became apparent that initiation had been practised throughout human history, and long before Western nations sent their people to Africa as traders, missionaries and civil servants. It was also discovered that missionaries and some African governments made several attempts to bring initiation schools to an end, but all such attempts were unsuccessful.

The general patterns of initiation comprise three phases, namely separation, threshold, and re-incorporation. To be transformed into a new state of being, one must leave one's old condition. The separation phase removes the initiate from familiar surroundings that reinforce the old identity. For the initiate it is a severance from the protection of the mother and family, which was indicative of childhood and dependency. The initiate must cross from innocence to self-knowledge, from simple dependence to the challenges of independence on one hand and community involvement on the other.

The threshold phase is preceded by the circumcision ritual. The circumcision operation often leaves a mark, a form of permanent scar which indicates to others that the individual has completed a particular rite of passage. Circumcision among the Southern Ndebeles is therefore also an ethnic identity mark. Circumcision is often experienced by initiates as a second birth, a "dying" to one phase of their lives and the roles associated with that stage (adolescence stage), leaving it behind, and entering a new stage with a new identity. During this process, the attitudes, attachments, and life patterns of the adolescence stage are left behind. They are given support and guidance by their instructors and those who have gone before them. During the threshold phase the initiates also have the opportunity to experience their own creativity, their source of inner strength and love, through the initiatory activities during their stay in the initiation school. These include severe ordeals and sometimes real confrontation with death. At the end of this phase, transformation is effected, as the internal structure of an initiate's former identity is dissolved and a new one constellated.

Any rite of passage must be informed by strong ethical standards, norms, skills, knowledge of one's environment and one's own culture. During the threshold phase the initiates are taught a number of things about manhood, about sexuality, about how the mother is never to have power over them again, about being a man and knowing what men must know and pass on. Initiates learn about themselves through reflections and discussions within the group. They address the basic personal questions: "Who am I?" and "What can I do with my life?" During this phase the initiate also learns to perform social roles, to respect elders and those in authority. Therefore, when boys go to the mountain they return with something to live by.

The development of the new identity which started at the end of the threshold phase is continued in the re-incorporation phase and is seen to completion. Through the ceremonial form, the initiates in transition are not only accorded a

designated position within their community, but also a firm and clear definition of their identity, their social roles, and their personal boundaries. They know where they fit.

According to their historical background, initiation among the Ndebele may be traced as far back as the 14th century. It has also become clear from their history that the Ndebele were a steadfast nation, having resisted all forms of foreign cultural influences. Because of the insufficient literature on Ndebele culture, the researcher sought additional information from knowledgeable informants with the aim of obtaining the knowledge as understood and experienced by the Ndebele people themselves. More valuable information on the organisation and administration of initiation, and on the various phases in the process of male initiation was obtained from these sources.

The Ndebele initiation stages conclude with the conclusion phase which consists of rituals such as the burning of the lodge, the cutting of the hair, the second parade, and the final incorporation of the initiates into the community. These rituals symbolise the end of childhood and everything related to it. When initiation is finally completed, initiates return to their original existence. Not only do they feel different, but they are also treated in a new way by the community. The boys have become men and are recognised as such by their families, their peers, and their communities. They emerge as totally different beings from what they were before their initiation. That is, each initiate has developed a new identity. He is given a clearly defined set of new rights and new responsibilities.

The attitude of traditional society towards initiation has proved to be generally strong. This has been evidenced by the forced circumcision of males who are over the circumcision age, or by abducting them to initiation schools. On the other hand members of modern society appeared to be divided over the issue. For instance, some maintain that circumcision is an old-fashioned barbaric practice that should

be done away with, whilst others argue that the practice is an African heritage that should be treasured and not to be done away with.

If critically analysed initiation appears to have serious disadvantages. Countless cases of injury and even death during the initiation period are reported in the media. The circumcision operation is a health risk, especially if one cutting instrument is used repeatedly. Apart from the disadvantages and other negative reports found in the literature, there are also many positive statements made about the initiation schools. The initiation school is regarded as a “mandatory crash course”. In a very short space of time an individual is taught essential social skills, such as how to solve problems using critical thinking. It appears initiation underlies *ubuntu* - the quality of being human and humane. It involves compassion, the use of strength on behalf of the weak, and the rule of not taking advantage of others.

In Chapter 3 the researcher established the meaning of the term “identity” in the context of his research work by looking at its divergent meanings. Identity formation in adolescence was discussed by using Erikson and Marcia's identity status paradigm (Erikson 1968:97 and Marcia 1980:551). The general theory on identity formation and the adolescent's relations was reviewed before the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele was specifically discussed. Here, aspects of development which influence identity formation in the initiation school were discussed. A strong emphasis was put on the factors influencing identity formation of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boys within the initiation school and finally a brief discussion of the role expectations of the Southern Ndebele boy after his initiation was given.

To establish the meaning of the term “identity”, the researcher started with what was common to all the definitions found in the literature study. He then defined identity as an individual's integration of his stability and continuity, with his



conception of himself compared with the conception held of him by people he esteems.

In his theory, Erikson distinguishes eight stages of development, the first five of which cover the years of childhood and adolescence. In his designation of each period of development, Erikson uses the term "versus" to indicate the two poles of success and failure. The fifth stage of psychosocial development (self-identity vs role confusion) was dealt with in greater detail because it is considered, in this research, as a particularly important and active stage in the lifelong process of identity formation. The four preceding stages of development were merely described in outline, but their necessary place in the task of building an identity was acknowledged.

Marcia's identity-status paradigm on the other hand is based on Erikson's theoretical model of identity. According to Marcia, the identity formation process is characterised by four identity statuses - namely identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion. These are not stages that adolescents pass through, but statuses that characterise the adolescent in achieving an identity. From the general theory of identity formation it has become apparent that the adolescent's earlier identifications play a very important role in identity formation. But it is only when the adolescent is able to select some and discard others of these earlier identifications into a new configuration. Although identity formation is a lifelong, ongoing task, it stabilises during adolescence. During this stage adolescents also experience various changes in their relationships with themselves, their parents, and religious values.

The ease with which adolescents are able to achieve a clear sense of identity depends on the kinds of relationships they have had and continue to have. Parents provide the security from which the child initiates other relationships. An adolescent who has a good relationship with himself is satisfied with the condition

of his body (i.e. his build and attractiveness), and is accepted by his peers and the other people he esteems. Before heterosexual relations can be formed, a well-established sexual identity is needed. Heterosexual relationships are extremely important to the child's self-actualisation and self-reliance. Following the peer group's demand for conformity, self-identity develops in such a way that the adolescent's uniqueness and his difference from the peer group are accepted.

The following aspects of development proved to have an impact on the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele boy within the initiation school: physical development, moral development, and social development. Basic physical changes take place during his exposure to vigorous physical activities and physical trials. These changes threaten the feeling of self-consistency which is indispensable for identity formation. However, if he is helped to integrate these changes, he will successfully form a positive, self-confident, personal identity. The initiate's relation with moral values develop to a point where he will conform to moral norms of his own free will. That is, he comes to identify with the norms of his society from personal conviction. With this new understanding of deep human values he now has a clearer sense of who he is. As a result of the initiate's social interactions with his fellow initiates, his instructors and experiences of various kinds in the initiation school, a positive self-concept and a positive identity are formed.

Factors influencing identity formation within the initiation school were identified as assignment of meaning, involvement, experience, self-concept, and self-actualisation. These factors were used by the researcher to evaluate whether the initiation school had effected any influence on the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. On his arrival at the initiation school the initiate assigns meaning to his immediate surroundings. He assigns meaning to the degree he experiences his involvement with the initiatory activities. The greater the involvement, the more intense the experience, the more efficiently will the assignment of meaning be directed. Once the initiate becomes aware of the self,

conception of an own identity arises. This self-identity comprises the answer to the question: "Who am I, as a Southern Ndebele boy?" When, upon graduation, the initiate sees himself realistically, accepts himself, and his self-esteem is not affected by his awareness of specific limitations, he is on his way to actualising himself as a Southern Ndebele man.

At the end of the initiation school the Ndebele initiate finds himself in a community in which he must inevitably play a role. Nevertheless, his newly achieved sense of identity must supplement the role he has to play in the community. Although the Ndebele boy is - by virtue of his new status - regarded as a man, he cannot be saddled with full responsibility because he is still dependent in too many ways. As a result he is simultaneously clouded with too many roles to play. For example, he still has to play a certain role as a boy, a friend and a member of the peer-group (both initiated and uninitiated), a scholar, and a traditional man, as he has to be involved in the initiation rites of the next initiation cycle. Having passed through what is often an experience of symbolic death and renewal, he has acknowledged and become familiar with the cycle that will occur within his lifetime. Moreover he has acquired experiential maps which will help him manipulate various roles.

Recommendations in connection with the findings in the literature study are made in the section below.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.3.1 Safety measures**

From the literature survey, the burning issue has been circumcision which turns septic. During the initiation school periods, more and more young men are admitted to hospital with septic wounds and other complications resulting from the operations. As a result mothers, in particular, are concerned about the safety of their children in the bush - some contract Aids or suffer amputation, whilst others

become sexually impotent. Worst of all, others do not come back. Therefore, the following precautions are recommended:

#### *5.3.1.1 Sterilisation of the cutting instruments*

In some areas a surgeon uses one spear to cut over 50 boys at a time (cf paragraph 2.7.3). It is obvious that a possibility exists that diseases can be passed from one boy to another. Therefore, the use of a sterilising liquid such as Hibiscol is important. If the surgeon soaks his spear in Hibiscol for five minutes before cutting, any virus, including HIV, will be killed and there will be a low risk of infection.

#### *5.3.1.2 The need for primary healthcare education for all stakeholders*

The fact that some initiates end up in hospital or in the grave shows a lack of primary healthcare education among the Southern Ndebele people. Due to the lack of knowledge, after boys are circumcised some bleed profusely until they become dehydrated. If all stakeholders, indunas or tribal chiefs, surgeons and tutors are given basic health care education, bush operations can be safe in the sense that complications will be identified earlier.

#### *5.3.1.3 The correct choice of a surgeon and instructors*

Most deaths in the initiation camps are blamed on the mystical fly-by-night "bush doctors" who are eager to make a quick cut and a lot of money. To prevent their children from being mutilated, fathers must arrange for their own surgeon - one who is familiar to them and has experience in the task. They must also appoint good guardians with vast experience, because deaths are also caused by a lack of adequate after-care. In other initiation camps there are no officially appointed guardians. Any bored and unemployed person - or a village drunk for that matter - may become a guardian. In the absence of a guardian or in the presence of an irresponsible guardian, the initiates will attempt to dress their own wounds. Some

initiates do not even wash their wounds for some days, and that is when the wounds fester. The appointment of a good guardian is also important in the sense that the nurturing of the boy's identity rests on his shoulders.

#### *5.3.1.4 The need for parental involvement*

Among the researcher's subjects there were initiates who had attended the initiation school without the permission of their parents. Parents only become aware of the whereabouts of their children when guardians come to fetch food for the already circumcised boys. Therefore, parents need to be fully involved in the initiation of their children. They must decide together with the child if he is ready to undergo initiation. No one must be initiated until he is ready. It is of utmost importance for the parents to send their child for blood tests, to determine whether or not he is suffering from any sexually transmitted disease. If the father or a brother are closely involved, complications can be identified at an early stage, and they will be able to act accordingly in order to save life. In fact when boys are being initiated, all the circumcised men in the community must be involved. Everyone should pray and offer assistance or guidance. Let it take the whole village to initiate boys into manhood.

#### **5.3.2 Hospital or bush circumcision?**

The researcher wants to review the ambivalence between traditional and modern society, in order to give the reader a clearer picture before recommendations are made.

Modern society argues that circumcision was practised when men knew only of tribal wars but not international wars - not to mention science and technology. The following comparison has become apparent: "Animals are guided by instinct, primitive man by custom, civilised man by conscience, and modern man is guided by public opinion" *City Press* (13 July 1996, p. 17). So it is virtually clear that

custom is associated with anything primitive. *City Press* goes further to ask the following questions: "Are we going back when the world is going forward? Are those of us who accepted to stay in the bushes learning about the past aware that developing countries seek changes that are faster than the traditional rhythm of historical change?" For any society to develop, it has to undergo social change, economic change, and political awareness.

In paragraph 2.8.2 it was indicated that members of modern society appear to be divided over the issue of circumcision. Some say circumcision should be done away with, some say medical practitioners should perform the operations in hospitals, and later discharge boys to the bush for the final ceremony, whilst others say only the circumcised male practitioners should come and do the operations in the bush and not in the hospital theatre. On the other hand members of the traditional society say circumcision is a cultural heritage that should be treasured. Admittedly, it is a custom which, like any other custom, should not die away. Mahdi, Christopher and Meade (1996:148) say that our ancestral elders have shown us that the value of the rites of passage for adolescents in crisis cannot be measured scientifically, if we could quantify "how much better" a person becomes for having undergone them.

In *City Press* (13 July 1997, p. 5) Dr Francis Ng'ombe, a Zambian traditional healer and a Christian who is also a Western trained doctor claims that in China he saw both worlds. During his visit to China he learned that on the one side they practise Western medicine and, when they fail, they refer patients to traditional Chinese healers. Therefore he advises South Africans to move away from the myth that all that is Western is good, and what is African is bad and evil.

Funani (1950:56) says hospital circumcision is a medical procedure not a culturally significant event in a man's life and it takes away the value of circumcision as an indicative of a man's worth in his group. We cannot expect to get a man who is

ready to face the world with its demands and difficulties from a person who was circumcised in hospital and sleeps in between hospital white sheets, enjoys central heating, electricity and tea or coffee. He however, acknowledges that science can step in where necessary but it should not serve to destroy culture.

In the light of the above genuine arguments, the following is recommended:

#### *5.3.2.1 The initiation schools need to be modified*

The world is currently undergoing a major transformation from a modern industrial society to a post-modern and post-industrial society. Initiation school practice cannot afford to remain where they have been for a thousand years. The researcher would like to see changes in the initiation schools with regard to hygiene conditions, methods of operating, discipline and educational programmes, and methods of feeding. The *kweperlatgevegte* could be abolished and the language of reciting praise poems changed from Pedi to Ndebele. The researcher advocates the modification of initiation schools solely with a view to building a better society that would meet the needs of a rapidly developing world, and not with the aim of destroying traditional culture.

#### *5.3.2.2 There should be networking between the initiation school and medical institutions*

It has become clear that the Southern Ndebele people are still holding on to a practice that which expresses who they are. As people who still cling to their traditional culture but who live in the modern society, they should gather all available data on their rich traditions from the past and merge them with those of contemporary society, and decide how they can “reinvigorate” them for use in their initiation rites. Funani (1950:61) is also trying to stress the same point when he claims that whites in South Africa are not aware of how much they could enrich themselves by becoming familiar with the diversity of African culture. *City Press* (21 July 1996, p. 16) endorses this point when it says “members of one culture may

adopt an artifact of another culture while adhering to other aspects of their own heritage". Therefore, initiation schools can ask for medical assistance in their community clinics or hospitals when it is necessary.

#### *5.3.2.3 An initiation-school committee should be set up*

It would be useful to set up an initiationschool committee consisting of the local tribal chief or induna, surgeons, guardians, and initiated members of the medical staff. A male nurse who has been initiated himself would be an extremely useful member of such a committee, not only because of his superior medical knowledge, but because he could intensively "workshop other members of the committee. Such a committee, with members elected for their different skills, could formulate a programme for surgeons and guardians. The committee could organise continuous discussions relating to problems arising from the initiation schools. It could be supervised by the tribal chief himself.

#### *5.3.2.4 Provincial governments should make legislation to control initiation-schools*

In Mpumalanga, especially in the former KwaNdebele area, high-ranking government officials have been abducted to initiation schools. Initiation should not be forced upon people. Therefore, legislation is needed to protect people from being forcibly abducted to initiation schools. The legislation should also empower police to invade initiation schools, to rescue those abducted, and also to track down the charlatans who have turned the initiation practice into a lucrative business.

#### *5.3.2.5 A vision for growth needs to be created*

The literature survey has revealed that, other than Jews, there are South African ethnic groups who also initiate their youths at an early age. The initiate is merely changed on the outside and returned to ordinary life in the community because he



is still too young to take up full responsibility. Mahdi et al (1996:312) says that, in such a case, it is doubtful that the purpose of initiation - the finding of one's personal life goals and self-identity - will be realised. When one goes to the mountain one must return with something (like ethical standards) to live by. In the Old Testament story of Moses, it is said that after he spent time on the mountain, he came back carrying the tablets, the standard by which he was told to live. Initiation must therefore be informed by strong ethical standards.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION**

In this chapter the qualitative approach was employed to investigate the role of the initiation schools towards the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys. To acquaint the reader with the nature of qualitative research, a background to qualitative research was given and its development explained.

Interviewing was selected as the method of obtaining data from the subjects. A detailed description of interviewing as a research technique was given. An interview schedule, consisting of a list of questions which were asked during the interview process, was also given. Both taperecording and note-taking were used as techniques for recording data.

The sample for this study consisted of ten subjects who were randomly selected from both the Manala and the Ndzundza circumcision camps. The circumcision camps were also randomly selected from five areas in the former KwaNdebele area in Mpumalanga. From the responses obtained through interviewing, a number of essential findings have come to light. However, the findings discussed in this summary are those which appear to have a significant influence on the identity formation of a Ndebele boy and those that affect his scholastic achievement. The findings are listed below:

- All subjects were motivated to go to the initiation school by a number of reasons other than their traditional culture. This shows that Ndebele youths grow up wanting to keep alive the fires of tradition.
- The separation of the boy from his immediate environment breaks off the connection with the mother, and the boy becomes henceforth attached to the world of men with which he identifies. The experience of separation and loneliness is one of the factors that creates a sense of identity.
- Before being circumcised, some subjects (cf paragraph 4.5) felt nervous, tense, and anxious. It is this elevated state of consciousness which serves to effect the transformation of the initiate into a new state of being.
- At the end of the initiation school, the fact that they had been circumcised held various meanings for the subjects. To some it meant they had fulfilled the basic requirement for manhood. For subjects No 3 and 5 it meant a licence to engage in pleasant sexual relationships and this shows a formation of a heterosexual identity.
- All subjects except No 6 formed intimate relationships among themselves as well as with their instructors. A positive identity is achieved through involvement with others in a relationship.
- Subject No 6 who, when interviewed, showed the characteristics of an introvert, said he did not have any role-model. He seemed withdrawn, and would not speak unless addressed. Nevertheless, all subjects had had role-models since childhood. Of these subjects, only Nos 2, 5 and 7 identified entirely with their role-models, the rest identified with only certain aspects of their role-models' personalities. If the adolescent is able to select and discard some identifying features in his role-model, it means identity

formation has occurred. If he identifies with all traits of the role-model, it means identification is still taking place.

- All subjects responded to the question, “Who am I, and how am I as a Southern Ndebele member of community?” with a clear sense of who and how they really were. If all subjects are able to answer these questions, it means they have developed their own identities.
- All subjects claimed to have matured to the point that every person undergoing initiation can reach. This implies that they all appear to be on their way to self-actualisation.
- On their return, all subjects experienced a sense of being accepted and appreciated by the community. This feeling of being accepted enhances the formation of a positive identity.
- All initiates said they were overwhelmed with joy returning home, recognised as “young men” in their communities. Not only did they feel recognised, but they also felt different and treated in a new way by their communities. This feeling of recognition and joy enhances the formation of a positive identity. The sparkle in their eyes, and the joy in their smiles when they answered this question made all the effort worthwhile.
- Nearly all subjects except Nos 2 and 8 felt very overloaded with their schoolwork as a result of their long absence from school. All strived to make up the backlog in their work. Of the ten subjects, only two failed the final examinations that year, one obtained a conditional pass, and the rest passed well.
- When the subjects' average performances were compared for the year they attended the initiation school (1997) and the year before the initiation

school (1996) five subjects were found to have performed better in 1997 than in 1996, and five had performed better in 1996 than in 1997.

Research on this topic was marred by several problems. A few of these problems are discussed below.

### **5.5 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED DURING THE INVESTIGATION**

During the literature study it became apparent that the available literature on the culture of the Ndebele consists of a relatively small body of writings. There are limited resources on the Ndebele culture available on library shelves. The available resources were, however, written many decades ago by authors who had not received any formal training in an established academic discipline. These sources often did not agree on certain points. Therefore, to trace the origin and the history of the initiation schools among the Ndebeles was not an easy task. That is why the researcher sometimes had to rely on informants (headmen, former guardians and surgeons and some elders of the tribe) for supplementary information.

Since the Ndebele initiation is an ultrasecret affair, most well-informed persons, especially those who occupy higher ranks within the tribal authorities, will not discuss the subject of initiation with strangers. Apart from this, the proceedings in the initiation school include an oath not to tell any outsider or women about the ritual and other secrets, on pain of the most severe sanctions. The newly initiated boy is forced to accept that the penalty for a breach of faith will be to have his throat cut or his tongue torn out by the root. Therefore, even newly initiated boys were not at liberty to divulge their experiences.

During the initiation period the researcher worked out a plan to gain the trust of the respondents and consequently establish a certain level of familiarity, encouraging them to disclose their feelings and experiences when the time of interviewing came. It was during this period that problems were experienced.

Four of the five initiation schools selected were situated deep in thick bush, through which an ordinary motor vehicle could not drive. One had to take a long walk. The greatest difficulty was that initiates were generally not available during the day, because they go hunting. They were only available at night or during weekends, and it is extremely cold to walk through the night, especially in winter.

During the weekends, the initiation camps are flooded with drinking visitors. Most of them work in far-away cities and can only afford to come during weekends. It is here that the *kweperlatgevegte* take place. The researcher was inevitably compelled to take part in the fight as well. A quince stick and a shield were provided by the guardians of the lodge. The war songs sung by the initiates and the by-standers made the situation resemble a war zone. On this day the researcher paid a physical price for his research. However, he did not regret having chosen his research topic, and, moreover, it was also part of his traditional culture.

From the above section and the recommendations given in Section 5.3, it became evident that much further research is required. The aspects that need further research are discussed below.

## **5.6 ASPECTS THAT NEED FURTHER RESEARCH**

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the role of the initiation schools in the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boy. The effect that initiation schools have on scholastic achievement was also researched, because the researcher wanted to satisfy his curiosity about it. Therefore, further intensive research is needed to investigate the effect of initiation schools on scholastic achievement.

Future research on initiation schools should give greater attention to aspects of the child's development other than the identity formation, and it should avoid being

gender-stereotyped. Therefore, the role of initiation schools in the development of, for instance, the adolescent's personality is also a topic worth researching. As a follow-up to the present study, for example, research could be undertaken to investigate the role of initiation schools in the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele's adolescent girls.

In South Africa there is a tendency to believe that all that is Western is superior, and what is African is inferior. It is imperative that relevant research be done. Therefore, research which encourages reconciliation between, or a merging of, initiation schools and medical institutions would appear very necessary.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

The general conclusion reached was derived from the main findings of the review of the literature and the empirical research undertaken. Conclusions were drawn with a view to selecting those factors which have a significant influence on the identity formation of Southern Ndebele boys.

All stages of the Southern Ndebele initiation rite - that is, phases that take place in public and those that are strictly secret have - together make an enormous contribution to the identity formation of a Southern Ndebele adolescent boy. The circumcision, itself at once, signifies the end at once of childhood and emergence of one's identity as a man. When analysing the advantages of initiation and initiation schools, it became apparent to the researcher that initiation schools play a significant role in the identity formation of the Southern Ndebele adolescent boy.

Identity formation in the initiate is achieved through the formation of sound relationships with himself, people he esteems (guardians, fellow initiates) and objects and ideas, including values and attitudes. There are also some aspects of development that have a significant impact on the identity formation of a Southern

Ndebele initiate. These developmental aspects are physical development, moral development, social development, and affective development. Of utmost importance is the fact that Southern Ndebele initiates were also seen to comply fully with the factors which are fundamental to identity formation. These factors are significance attribution, involvement, experience, self-concept and self-actualisation.

In the empirical research, all subjects but one had established intimate relationships with their fellow initiates and guardians. This means identity formation had occurred because, for intimate relationships to occur, identity formation must first be formed. All initiates were actively involved in various initiatory activities. This means identity formation had occurred, because it is through involvement with the world around him that the adolescent's activities define his identity. Out of the ten subjects, seven subjects identified with certain aspects of their role-model's personalities, and discarded other aspects. If the adolescent is able to select and discard identity features in his role-model, it means identity formation has occurred.

All subjects responded to the question, "Who am I?", with a clearer sense of who they really were. If an adolescent can give an answer to the question "Who am I?", it means identity formation has really occurred. When the subjects were reincorporated into their respective communities, they all experienced a sense of belonging, cohesion and of being accepted by their communities.

Therefore, from the above exposition, it can be concluded that initiation schools play a very important role in the identity formation of Southern Ndebele adolescent boys.

The perception that initiation schools contribute to the high failure rate in formal schools can also be disputed, because out of the ten subjects who wrote the 1997 final year examination, only two failed.

In the context of the above findings and recommendations the researcher wishes to conclude by saying that, although times have changed a great deal over the years, it would be foolish indeed, almost at the end of the twentieth century, to say that life ought to be lived at the same pace, in the same manner, and with the same equipment that was used in the first century. Progress simply does not permit of this, no matter how much one may long for the "old days". Did we not send our daughters and sons to school so that they can see beyond the horizon? Is it not time, now, to merge the knowledge coming from the West with our rich traditional culture?

If one accepts that times do change - and have always done - and that you are now faced with a new way of life, it is important to ensure that one's values remain unaltered, one's identity unchanged - that is, there is a sense of continuity between one's past, present and future. This can be achieved by perpetuating one's cultural heritage. One cannot gain a genuine identity by shedding one's heritage. Anyone who abandons his past or cultural roots becomes tied to his former colonisers. Modernisation may mean taking on a new and foreign technology, but it does not mean that Africans should abandon their cultural heritage as though the only one who could use modern technology was one who acted, dressed, thought, and behaved like those from whom the technology was obtained. It is also not impossible for Africans to industrialise their continent without modernising. In Japan, for example, traditional culture is supported by the masses - and yet Japan is a highly industrialised country.



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